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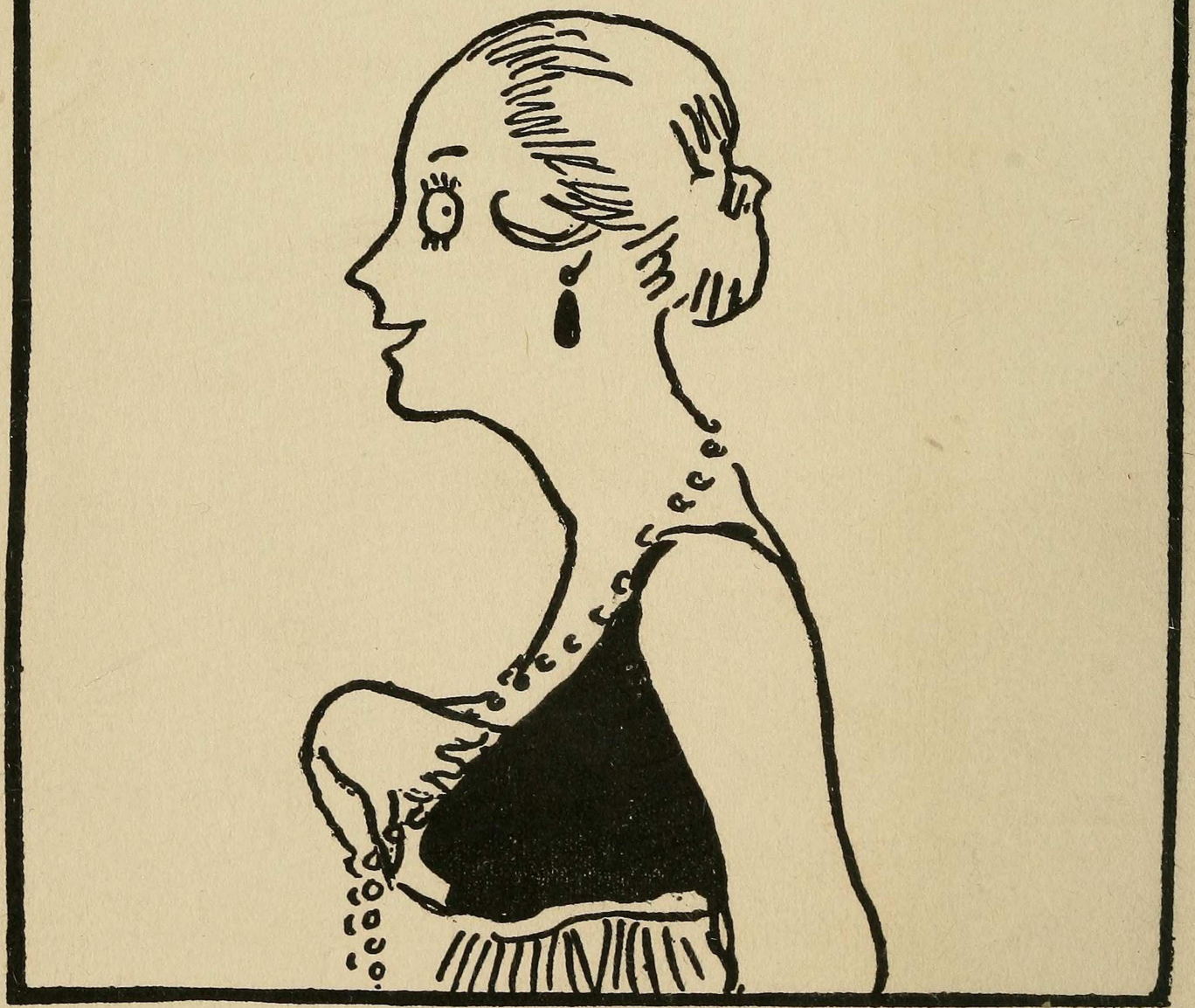
LOVE LETTERS OF BILL TO MABLE

B.B.



MABLE

Love Letters of Bill to Mable

Comprising

Dere Mable
"Thats me all over, Mable"
"Same old Bill, eh Mable!"

By

Lieut. Edward Streeter

WITH 87 ILLUSTRATIONS IN BLACK-AND-WHITE BY

G. William Breck
("Bill Breck")

New York
Frederick A. Stokes Company
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DEDICATION

To a million Private Bills who have suddenly learnt to call a coat a blouse. Taking things as they find them. Vaguely understanding. Caring less. Grumbling by custom. Cheerful by nature. Ever anxious to be where they are not. Ever anxious to be somewhere else when they get there. Without thought of sacrifice. Who have left the flag-waving to those at home. Who serve as a matter of course.

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Dere Mable

Love Letters of a Rookie

Dere Mable:

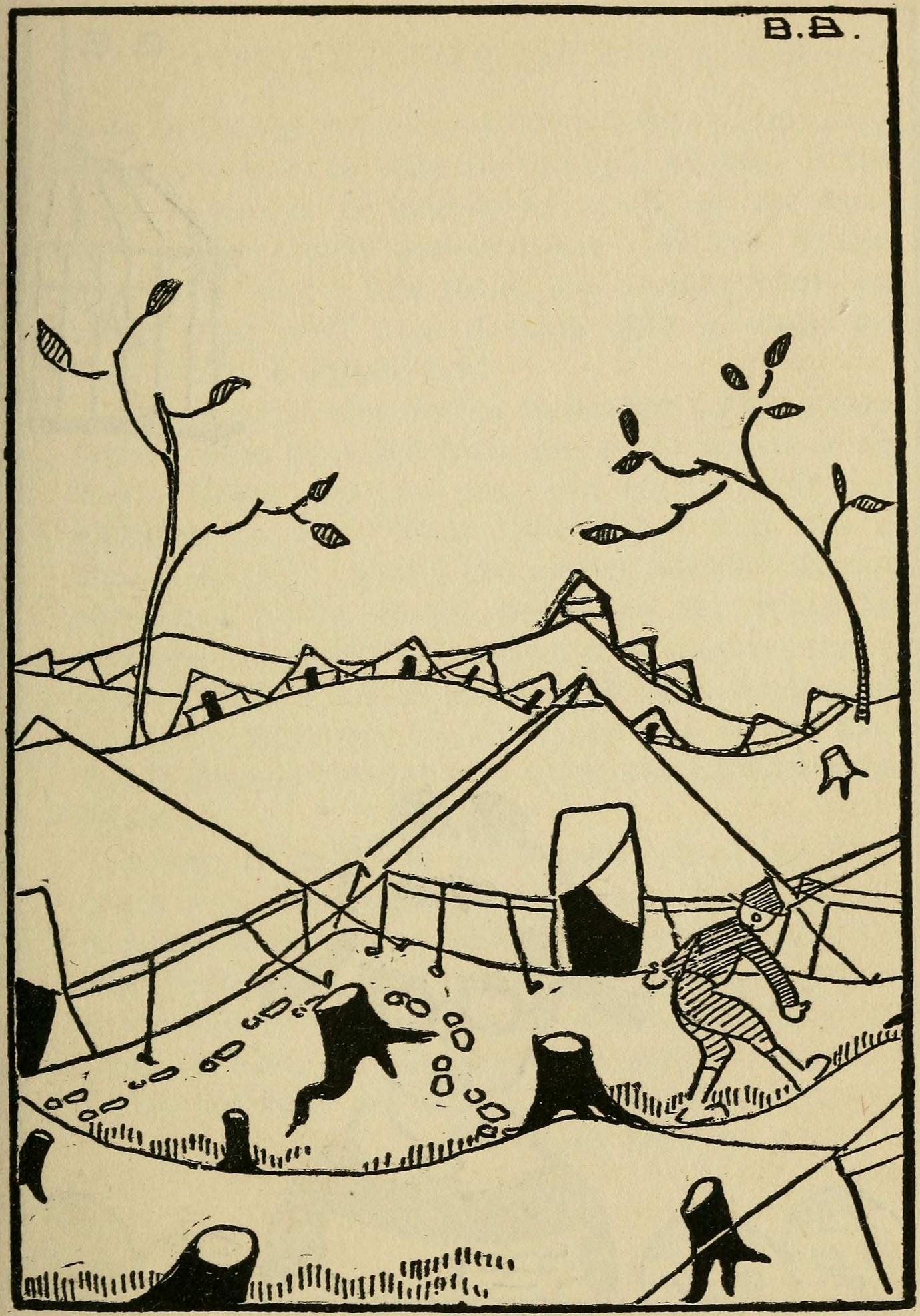
I guess you thought I was dead. Youll never know how near you was to right. We got the tents up at last, though, so I got a minit to rite. I guess they choose these camps by mail order. The only place there flat is on the map. Where our tents is would make a good place for a Rocky Mountin goat if he didnt break his neck. The first day the Captin came out an says "Pitch your tents here." Then he went to look for someone quick before anyone could ask him how. I wish I was a Captin. I guess he thought we was Alpine Chasers. Eh, Mable? But you probably dont know what those are.

Honest, Mable, if Id put in the work I done last week on the Panamah Canal it would have been workin long before it was. Of course there was a lot of fellos there with me but it seemed like all they did was to stand round and hand me shovels when I wore em out.

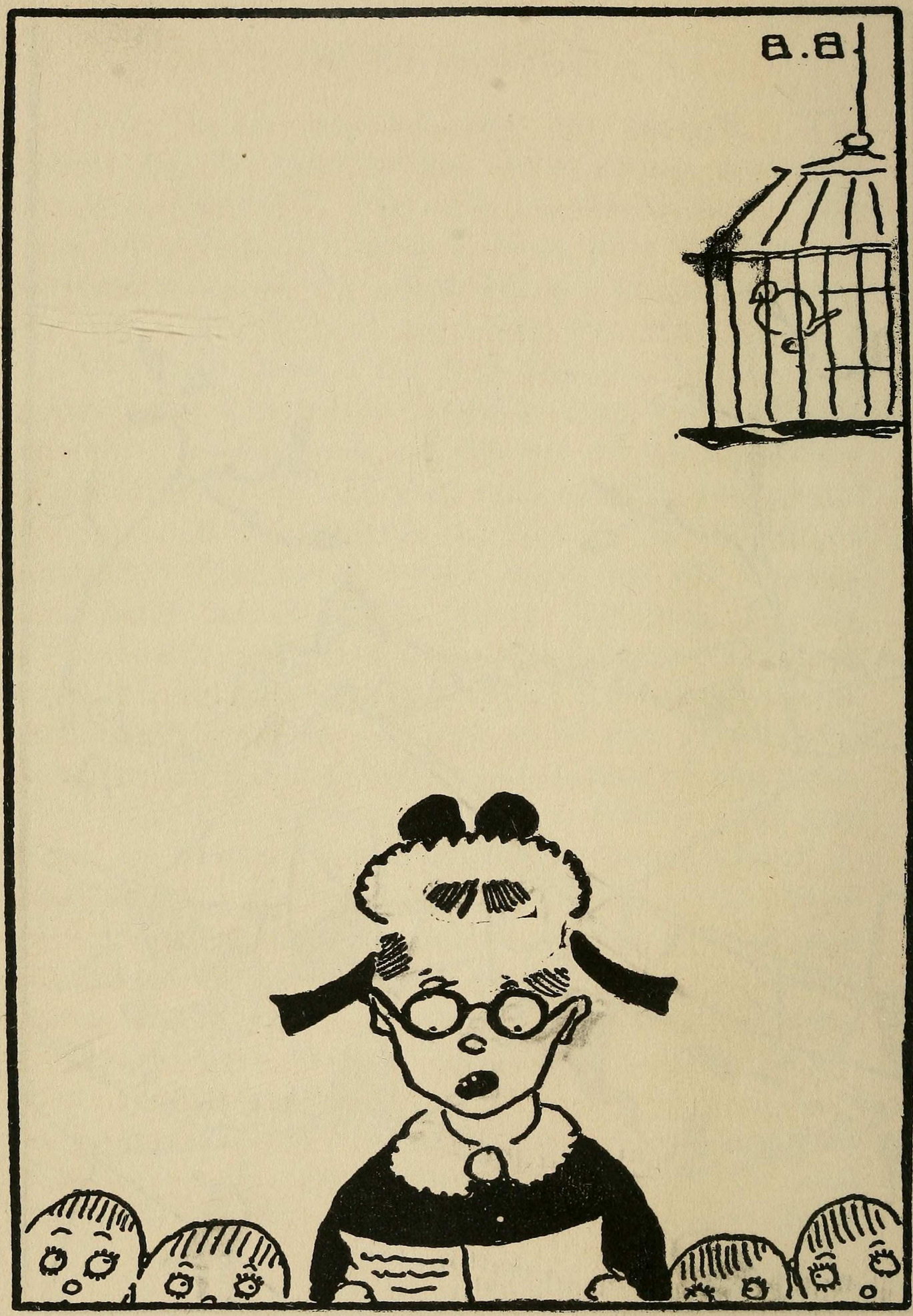
The Captin appresheates me though. The other day he watched me work awhile and then he says "Smith." He calls me Smith now. We got very friendly since I been nice to him. I noticed none of the other fellos had much to say to him. I felt kind of sorry for him. Hes a human bein even if he is a Captin, Mable. So every time I saw him I used to stop him and talk to him. Democratic. Thats me all over, Mable. "Smith" he says "If they was all like you round here war would be hell, no joke." By which he meant that we would make it hot for the Boshes.

I been feelin awful sorry for you, Mable. What with missin me and your fathers liver gone back on him again things must have been awful lonesome for you. It isnt as if you was a girl what had a lot of fellos hangin round all the time. Not that you couldnt have em, Mable, but you dont an theres no use makin no bones about it. If it hadnt been for me I guess things would have been pretty stupid though I dont begrudge you a sent. You know how I am with my money. I guess you ought to anyway. Eh, Mable? Never talk of money matters in connexun with a woman. Thats me all over.

Now I got started an found a fountin pen an the Y.M.C.A. givin away paper like it does Im goin to rite you regular. They say there



"THE ONLY PLACE THERE FLAT IS ON THE MAP"



"YOU CAN READ EM TO YOUR GRANCHILDREN"

goin to charge three sents for a letter pretty soon. That aint goin to stop me though, Mable. There aint no power in heavin or earth, as the poets say, as can come between you and me, Mable. You mite send a few three sent stamps when you rite. That is if your fathers able to work yet. And willin, I should add.

Of course it aint nothin to me but Id keep these letters what you get from me as a record of the war. Some day you can read em to your granchildren an say "Your Granfather Bill did all these things." Aint I the worst, Mable? Serious though I havnt found noone so far what has thought of doin this except the newspapers. I guess Ill get a lot of inside stuff that theyll never see. So this may be the only one of its kind. But it doesnt matter to me what you do with them, Mable.

Later Ill tell you all about everything but I guess you wont understand much cause its tecknickle. Lots of the fellos are gettin nitted things and candy and stuff right along. Dont pay no attenshun to that, though, or take it for a hint cause it aint. I just say it as matter of rekord. Independent if nothin. Thats me all over.

Yours till the war ends

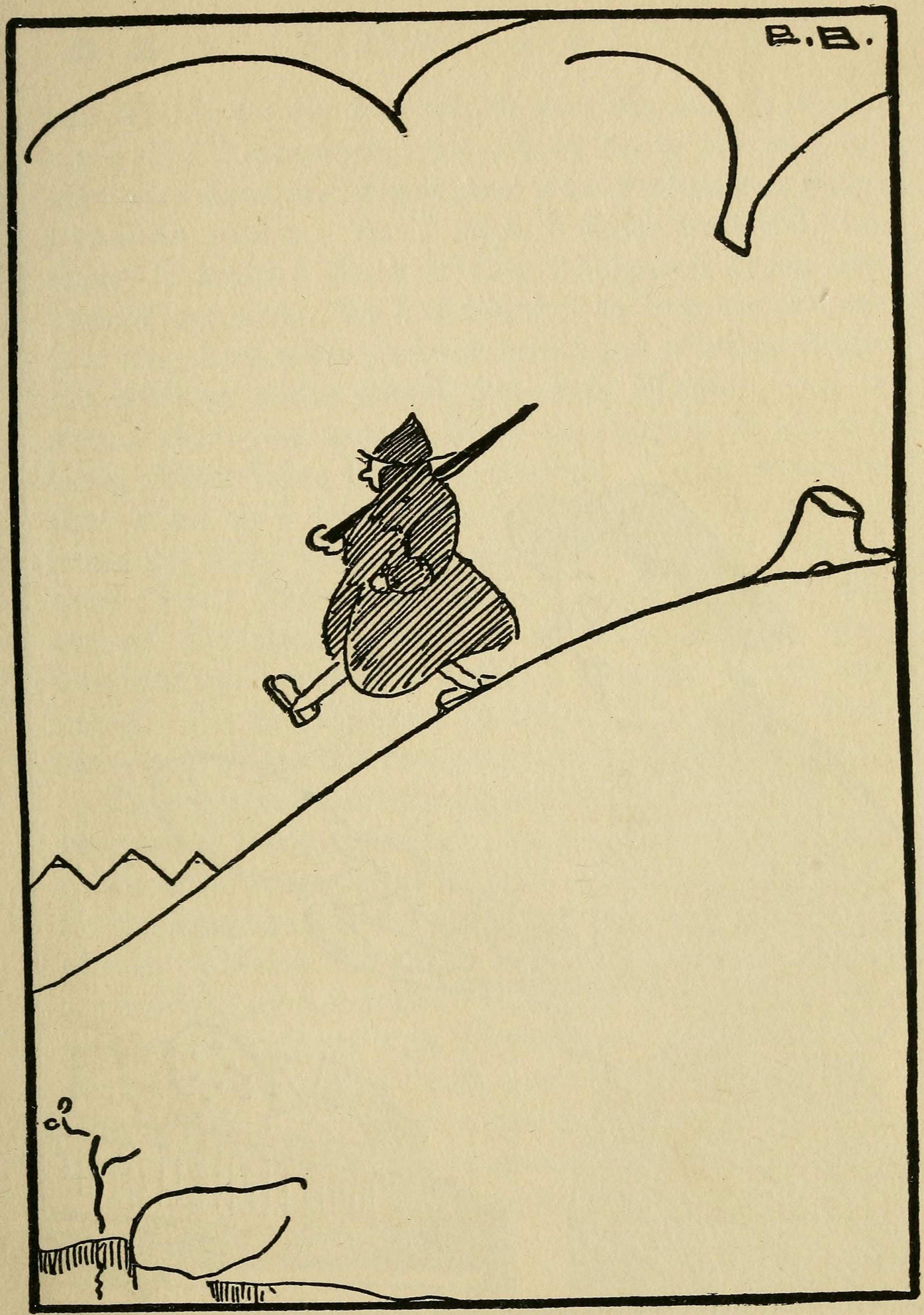
Bill.

Dere Mable:

Having nothin better to do I take up my pen to rite.

We have been here now three weeks. As far as I am concerned I am all ready to go. I told the Captin that I was ready any time. He said yes, but that wed have to wait for the slow ones cause they was all goin together. I says was I to go out to drill with the rest. He said yes more for the example than anything else. Its kind of maddening to be hangin round here when I might be over there helpin the Sammies put a stop to this thing.

In the mean time I been doin guard duty. Seems like I been doin it every night but I know what there up against and I dont say nothin. Guard duty is something like extemperaneus speakin. You got to know everything your goin to say before you start. Its very tecknickle. For instance you walk a post but there aint no post. An you mount guard but you dont really mount nothin. An you turn out the guard but you dont really turn em out. They come out them selves. Just the other night I was walkin along thinkin of



"YOU WALK A POST BUT THERE AINT NO POST"

"I JUST FOUND IT IN MY BAKIN CAN"

you Mable an my feet which was hurtin. It made me awful lonesome. An officer come up and he says why dont you draw your pistol when you here someone comin. An I says I dont wait till the sheep is stole I drew it this afternoon from the Supply sargent. An I showed it to him tucked inside my shirt where noone could get it away from me without some tussel, you bet, Mable. But it seems that you got to keep on drawin it all the time. Then later I here footsteps. I was expectin the relief so I was right on the job. An a man come up and I poked my pistol right in his face an says Halt. Who goes there? And he says Officer of the day. An bein disappointed as who wouldnt be I says Oh hell. I thought it was the relief. An he objected to that. The relief, Mable—but whats the use you wouldnt understand it.

Theres some mistake up north Mable about the way were built, Mable. Its kind of depresin to think that you could forget about us so quick. Everyones gettin sweters without sleeves and gloves without fingers. We still got everything we started with Mable. Why not sox without feet and pants without legs. If your makin these things for after the war I think your anticipatin a little. Besides its depresin for the fellos to be reminded all the time. Its like givin a fello a life membership to the Old Soldiers home to cheer him up

when he sails. I was sayin the other day that if the fellos at Washington ever get onto this theyll be issuin soleles shoes and shirtles sleves.

Its gettin awful cold. No wonder this is a healthy place. All the germs is froze. I guess there idea of the hardenin proces is to freeze a fello stiff. The Captin said the other day we was gettin in tents of trainin. Thats all right but Id kind of like to see those steam heated barraks. Youve red about those fellos that go swimmin in the ice in winter. I guess thed like our shouer baths. They say Cleanliness is next to Godliness, Mable. I say its next to impossible.

I started this letter almost a weak ago. I just found it in my bakin can. They call it a bakin can but its too small to bake nothin. I keep my soap in it. I got some news for you. The regiment is to be dismantled. The Captin called me over this mornin and asked me where Id like to be transferred. I said home if it was the same to him. So there goin to send me to the artillery. This is a very dangerous and useful limb of the servus, Mable. I dont kno my address. Just write me care of the General.

I got the red muffler that your mother sent me. Give her my love just the same

yours relentlessly,

Bill.

Dere Mable:

I havnt rote for some time I had such sore feet lately. When they broke up our regiment and sent me over to the artillery I thought I was goin to quit usin my feet. That was just another roomor.

Thanks for the box of stuff you sent me. I guess the brakeman must have used it for a chair all the way. It was pretty well baled but that dont matter. And thanks for the fudge too. That was fudge wasnt it, Mable? And the sox. They dont fit but I can use them for somethin. A good soldier never throws nothin away. An thank your mother for the half pair of gloves she sent me. I put them away. Maybe sometime shell get a chance to nit the other half. Or if I ever get all my fingers shot off theyll come in very handy.

The artillerys a little different from the infantry. They make us work harder. At least theres more work on the skedule. I know now what they mean when they say that the "artillerys active on the western front."

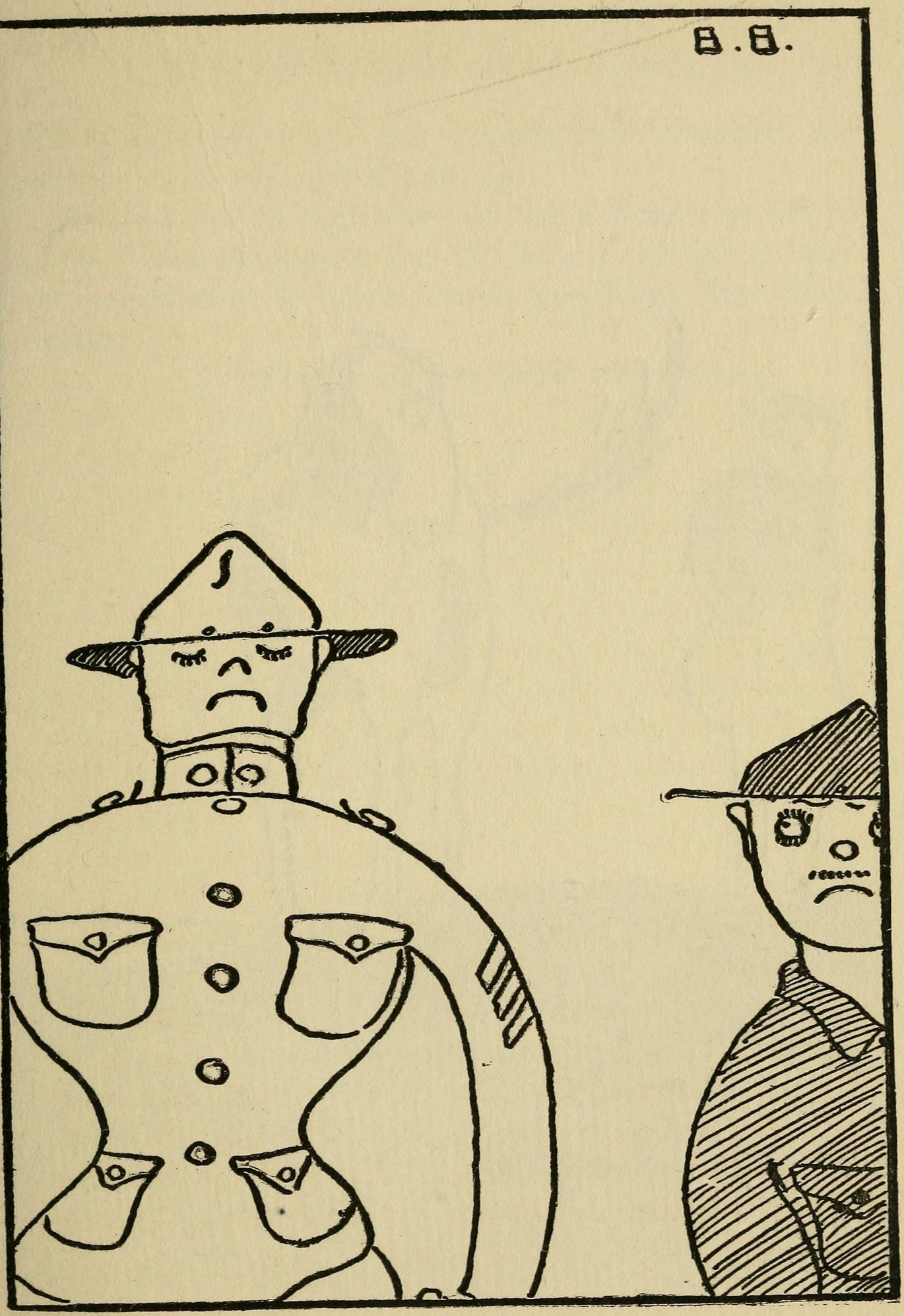
They got a drill over here called the standin gun drill. The names misleadin. I guess it was in-

vented by a troop of Jap akrobats. They make you get up and sit on the gun. Before you can get settled comfortable they make you get down again. It looks like they didnt know just what they did want you to do.

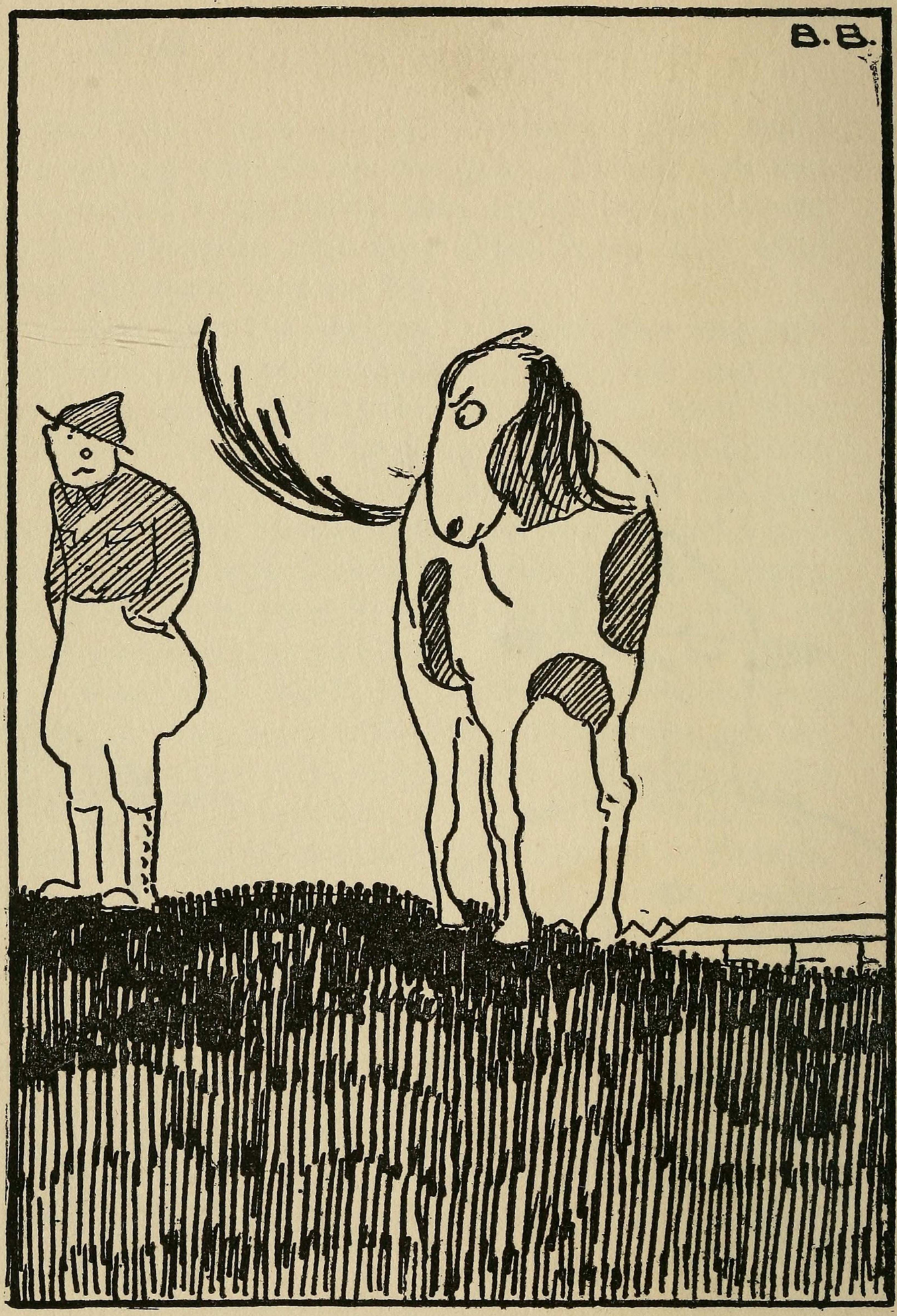
I dont like the sargent. I dont like any sargent but this one particular. The first day out he kept sayin "Prepare to mount" and then "Mount." Finally I went up to him and told him that as far as I was concerned he could cut that stuff for I was always prepared to do what I was told even though it was the middle of the night. He said, Fine, then I was probably prepared to scrub pans all day Sunday.

I dont care much for horses. I think they feels the same way about me. Most of them are so big that the only thing there good for is the view of the camp you get when you climb up. They are what they call hors de combat in French. My horse died the other day. I guess it wasnt much effort for him. If it had been he wouldnt have done it.

They got a book they call Drill Regulations Field and Light. Thats about as censible as it is all the way through. For instance they say that when the command for action is given one man jumps for the wheel and another springs for the trail an another leaps for the muzzle. I guess



"I DONT LIKE ANY SARGEANT"



"I DONT CARE MUCH FOR HORSES, THEY FEELS THE SAME WAY ABOUT ME"

the fello that rote the regulations thought we was a bunch of grass hoppers.

Well I got to quit now an rite a bunch of other girls. Thanks again for the box although it was so busted that it wasnt much good but that dont matter.

Yours till you here otherwise,

Bill.

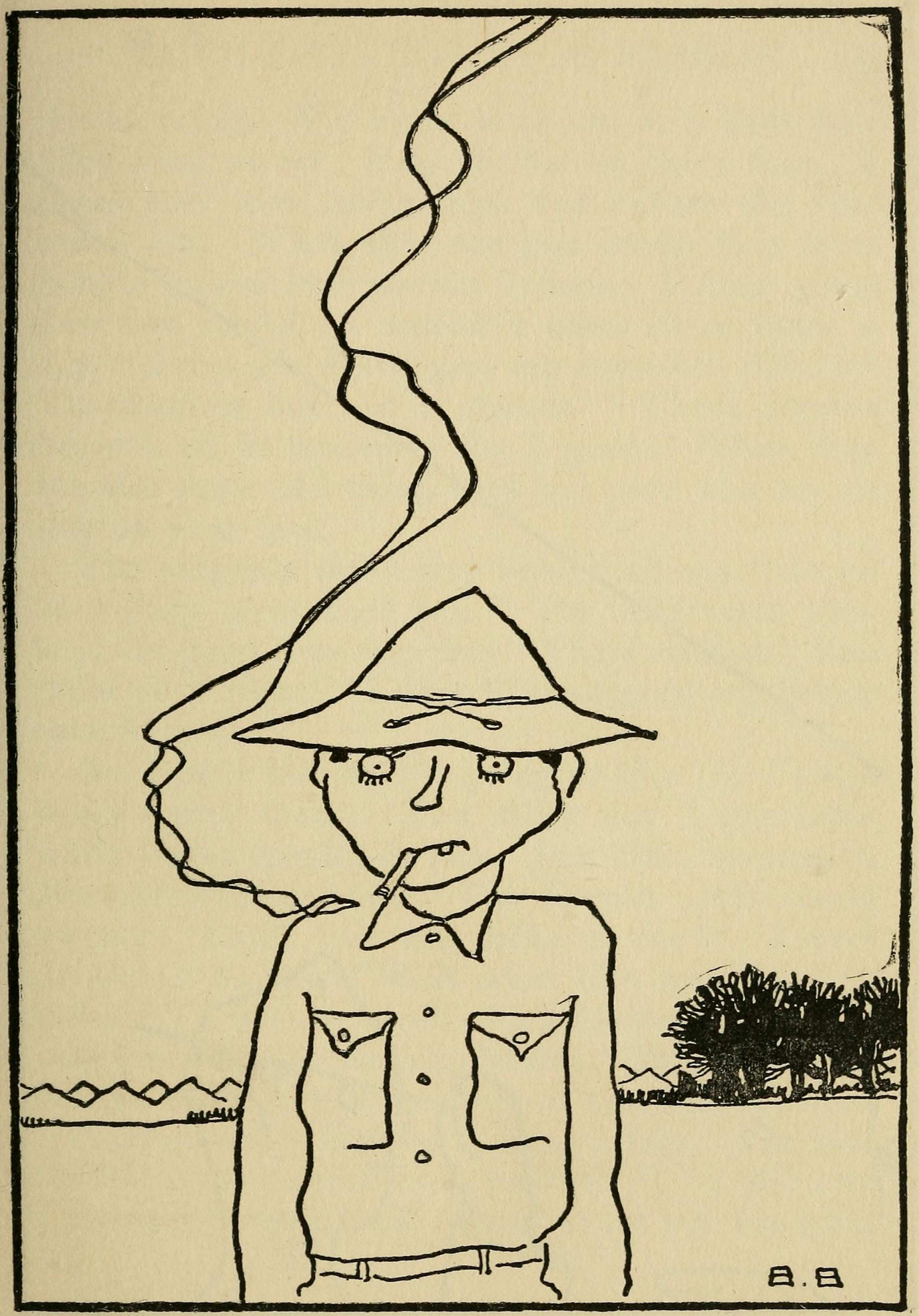
Dere Mable:

Todays Thanksgivin. Im thankful things aint no worse though Max Glucos what lives on the next cot says they couldnt be. Cheery an bright to the last. Thats me all over, Mable.

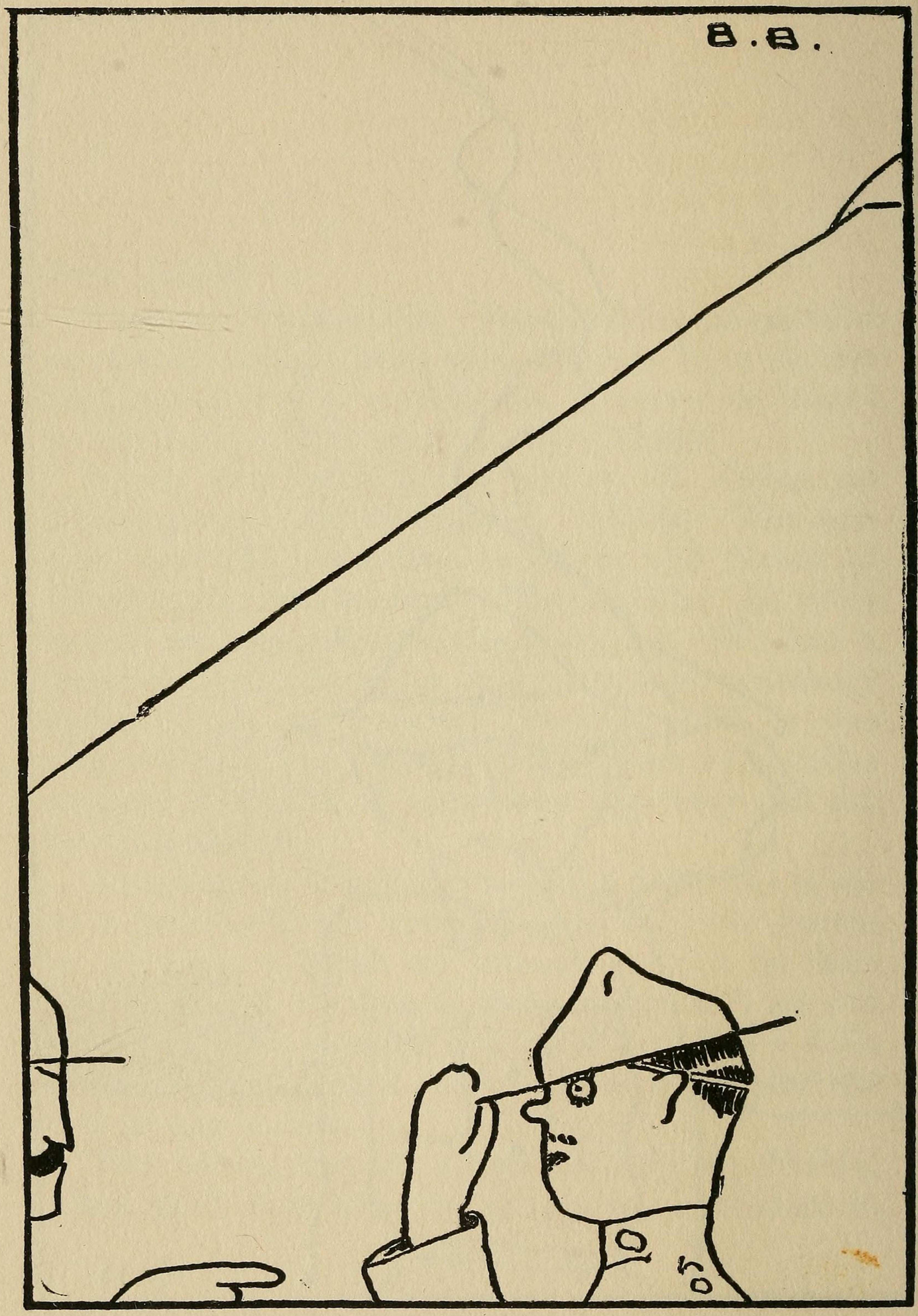
Every man gets ateen ounces of Turky on Thanksgivin. All to himself, Mable. The sargent says the commitee on Hays and Beans at Washington decides that. Mines inside. Im most to full for expreshun as the poets say. We had a great dinner. Soup an turky, dressin, crambury sause an pie an smashed potatoes. All in one plate. I wish you could have heard how the fellos enjoyed it Mable. I know now why they call the turkys gobblers.

Thanksgivin is a holiday. All a fello has to do on a holiday in the artillery is to feed the horses an give em a drink an smooth em out an take em for a walk an then feed em an smooth em out an feed em an give em a drink. It makes a fello feel like givin back a dollar out of his pay at the end of the month.

The horses has the softest of anyone, Mable. They dont even have to get up for breakfast in



"MAX GLUCOS WHAT LIVES ON THE NEXT COT"



"SMITH ARE YOU LAFFIN AT ME?"

the morning. We bring it to em in a little bag filled with cereul. You tie this on there face. I guess they aint never been fed before the war broke out. When they see you comin they start jumpin round like starvin sailurs. I dont guess they like cereul. I wouldn't ether three times a day. I thought theyd give em somethin different Thanksgivin but not a chance. There always hopin it ull be somethin else I guess. When they see the same old thing they get sore and try to step on your feet.

The sargents stand way behind an say "Go on in. They wont hurt you." An then when they land on your corn they say "Thats to bad. You didnt do it right." I dont like sargents any better than horses.

An I dont kno as Im going to like the Captin much better ether. The other day I got laffin while I was standin in line. Just laffin to myself. Not disturbin nobody. The Captin turns round an says "Smith are you laffin at me?" I says no sir an he says "Well what else was there to laff at?" Thats the kind of a fello he is. I didn't sass him back or nothin, Mable. Just looked at him an made him feel cheap. I saw him again in the afternoon. Course I didnt salute. He says "What do you mean by not salutin?" I told him I thought he was mad. Im glad Im not his wife,

Mable. You never know how to take a fello like that.

If I hadnt knowed they needed me Id have given him two weaks notise on the spot. Duty before pleasure though. Thats me all over.

We took the guns out to drill the other day. The Captin was talkin about indirect firin. Thats the way he is. Nothin straight forward about him. I asked the sargent about it. He said indirect firin was where you shot at one thing an aimed at another. I hate to butt in Mable but it didnt seem right. I says I seen the Indien girl in the circus shoot the spots out of a card over her shoulder but wouldnt it be more censible to cut out the trick stuff till we was more used to the thing. You cant argue with sargents, though.

Day after tomorrows inspecshun. They do it every Saturday. Thats another thing Im thankful for. Theres only one Saturday a weak. We pull everything out an pile it on our cots. Then the Captin an the sargent comes in. Every time its the same. He says "Thats very dirty Smith wheres your other shirt." An I say "I aint got none, sir." An he says "Sargent make a note of that." An then the sargent rites somethin in a little book. Next time just the same. The Captin says wheres my shirt an the sargent makes a note. I guess theres somethin in the drill regula-

tions what makes him say that cause I aint got no other shirt yet.

Well Mable Im gettin hungry again now. Guess Ill have to stop an buy a couple of pies. We dont get nothin to eat for an hour yet.

yours till the ice cracks in the pale,

Bill.

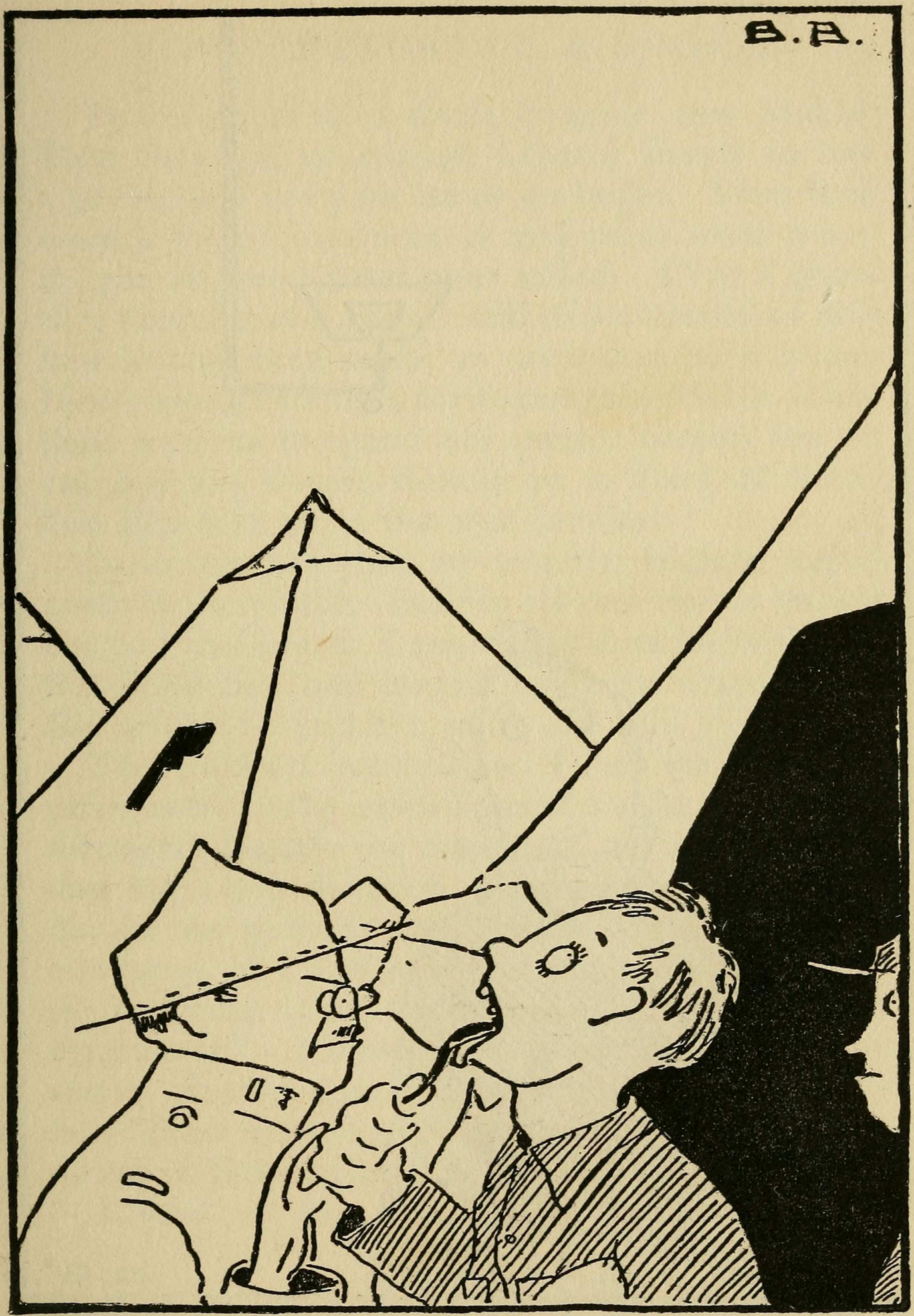
P. S. I had to borrow a stamp for this letter. I went down town yesterday an spent my last sent on a money belt. Its a good one though.

Dere Mable:

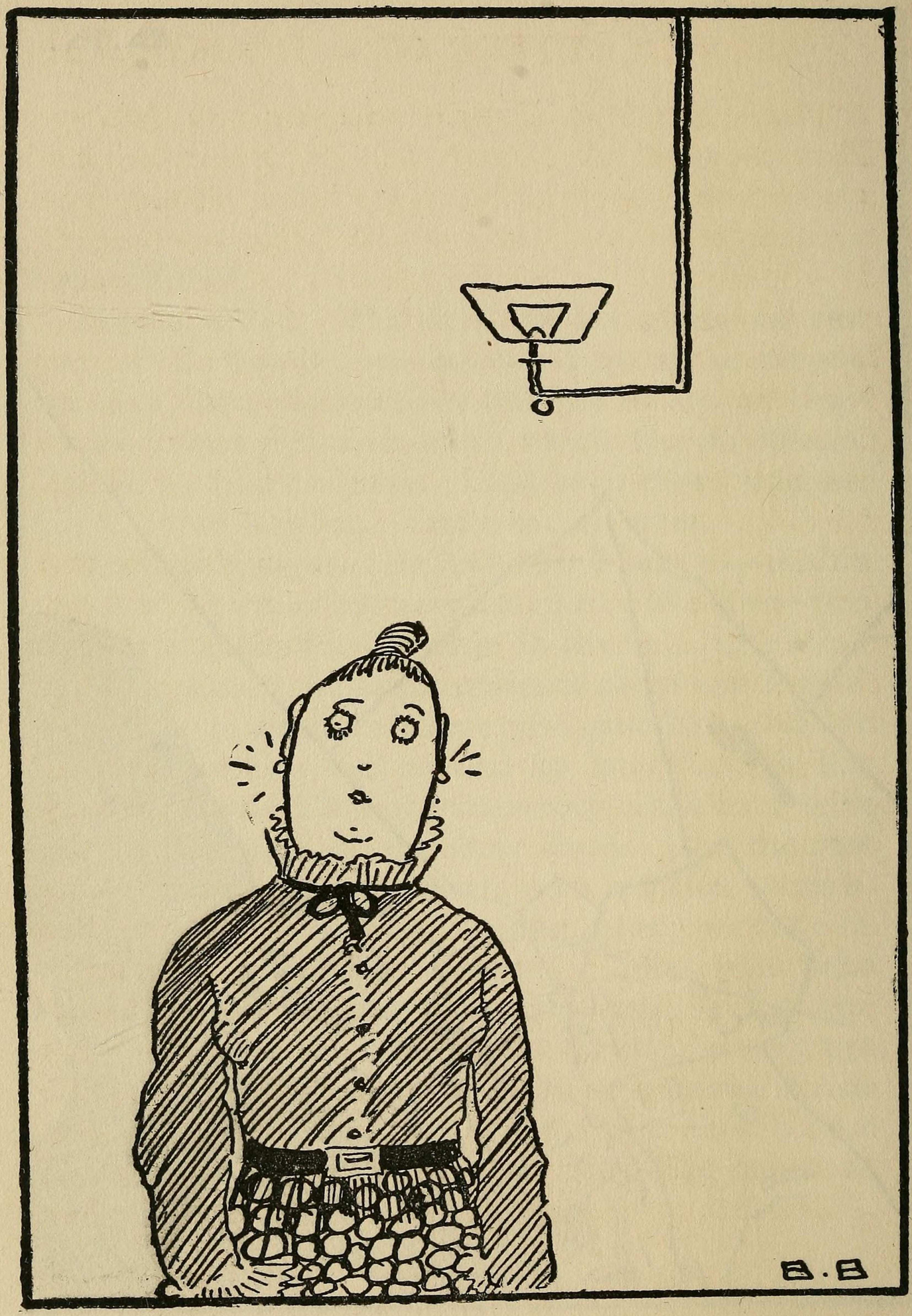
Rainin today. No drill so Im going to rite you. If I dont get no exercise I go all to pieces. Im back from the artillery into the infantry. Captin an I had different ideas about runnin things. One of us had to leave. Hed been there longest. I left. Hot headed. Thats me all over.

Were doin baynut drill now. I cant say nothin about it. Its not for wimens ears. We have one place where we hit the Hun in the nose an rip all the decorashuns offen his uniform all in one stroke. Then theres another where you give him a shave an a round hair cut an end by knocking his hat over his eyes. Then the wiperzup come over with a lot of bums an do the dirty work. I an the rest of the fellos go ahead an take another trench. I havnt been able to find out yet where we take it.

Its all worked out cientifick. The fello who doped it out had some bean. The principul of the thing is to get the other fello an not let him get you. If the allys had doped out some skeme like this the war would have been over now. There wouldnt have been no Huns left. It takes us Uncle Sammies. Eh Mable?



"ONE DAY ITS OUR TEETH"



"REMEMBER ME TO YOUR MOTHER"

There gettin up a thrift campain now Mable. First they sell us enough Liberty Bonds to buy a brand new army an let us go home. Then they cram a lot of insurence at you what wont never do you no good after your killed. Then I guess they found that someone still had a couple of dollars left so they made us send that back home. Now there gettin up a thrift campain Mable. They dont want us to spend our money foolish sos we can buy the Singer Buildin or a Ford or somethin like that when the war is over.

Some one say that we was the highest payed army in the world. Besides all this money we get our bed and board. I guess they dont know that in the army bed and board mean the same thing. Eh, Mable? Still the same old Bill.

There always inspectin us. I feel like a piece of prize beef. They never inspect a man all the way through. I guess the inspecters get payed by the day durin the duration of the inspecshun. One day its our teeth an another our heart an another our lungs. The other day we was all lined up in the company street and the sargent says "Inspecshun arms." I lays down my gun an rolls up my sleves. Just to show you how tecknickle the army is he didnt want to see my arms at all but my gun. Hows a fello goin to tell, Mable?

I went up for thirds at breakfast the other

morning as usual an the cook said "You seem to like coffee." Right away without stoppin to think or nothin I says back "Yes thats the reason Im willin to drink so much hot water to get some." Eh, Mable?

Went to a dance the other night and met some swell girls. I made em all laff. I says I guess I gots the instinks of a soldier all right. The minit I smell powder Im right on my tows.

I havent been very well lately. I guess Ill cut out eatin at meals. It spoils my appitite for the rest of the day. I kno youll be glad to kno my feet aint hurtin so much. Remember me to the hired girl and your mother.

Yours through the winter,

Bill.

Chair Mable:

Thats French. I didnt expect you to kno what it meant though. The Y.M.C.A. are learnin me French now. I only had three lessons so far but I can talk it pretty good. You know how quick I am at pickin up any kind of trick stuff like that. The only difference between French and English is that there pretty near alike but the French dont pronounce there words right.

When I use French words Ill underline them. Thatll give you some idea of the languige.

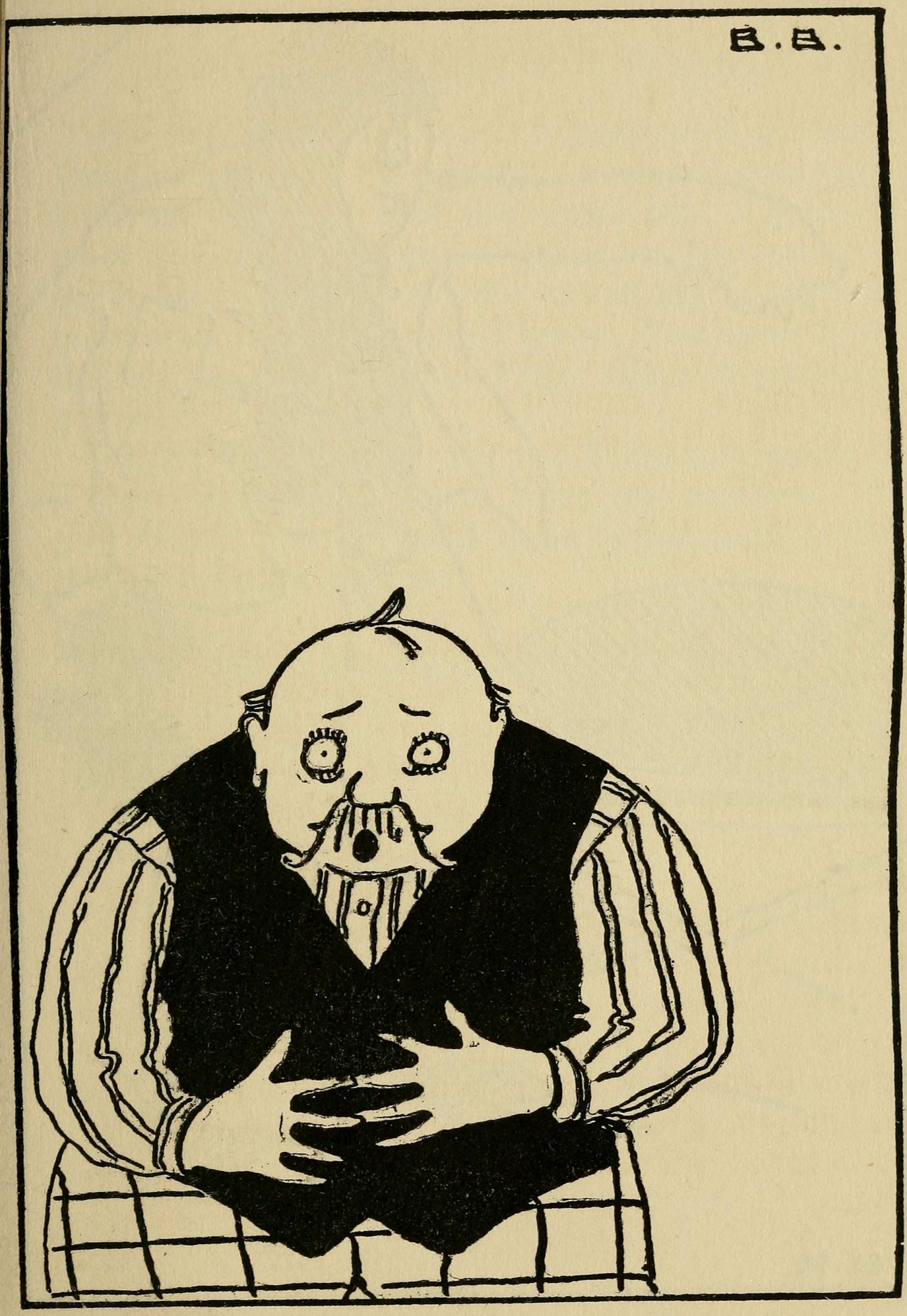
When we get voila as the French say for over there itll come handy to be able to sit down and have a dosy dos with them poilus. (That means chew the rag in English.) A poilus Mable is a French peasant girl an they say that they are very belle. (Now don't mispronounce things an get sore till you know. You pronounce that like the bell in push button. It means good lookers.) There crazy about us fellos. They call us Sammies. They named one of there rivers for us. You have heard of the battle of the Samme. But I dont suppose you have.

They have been learnin us a lot about gas at-

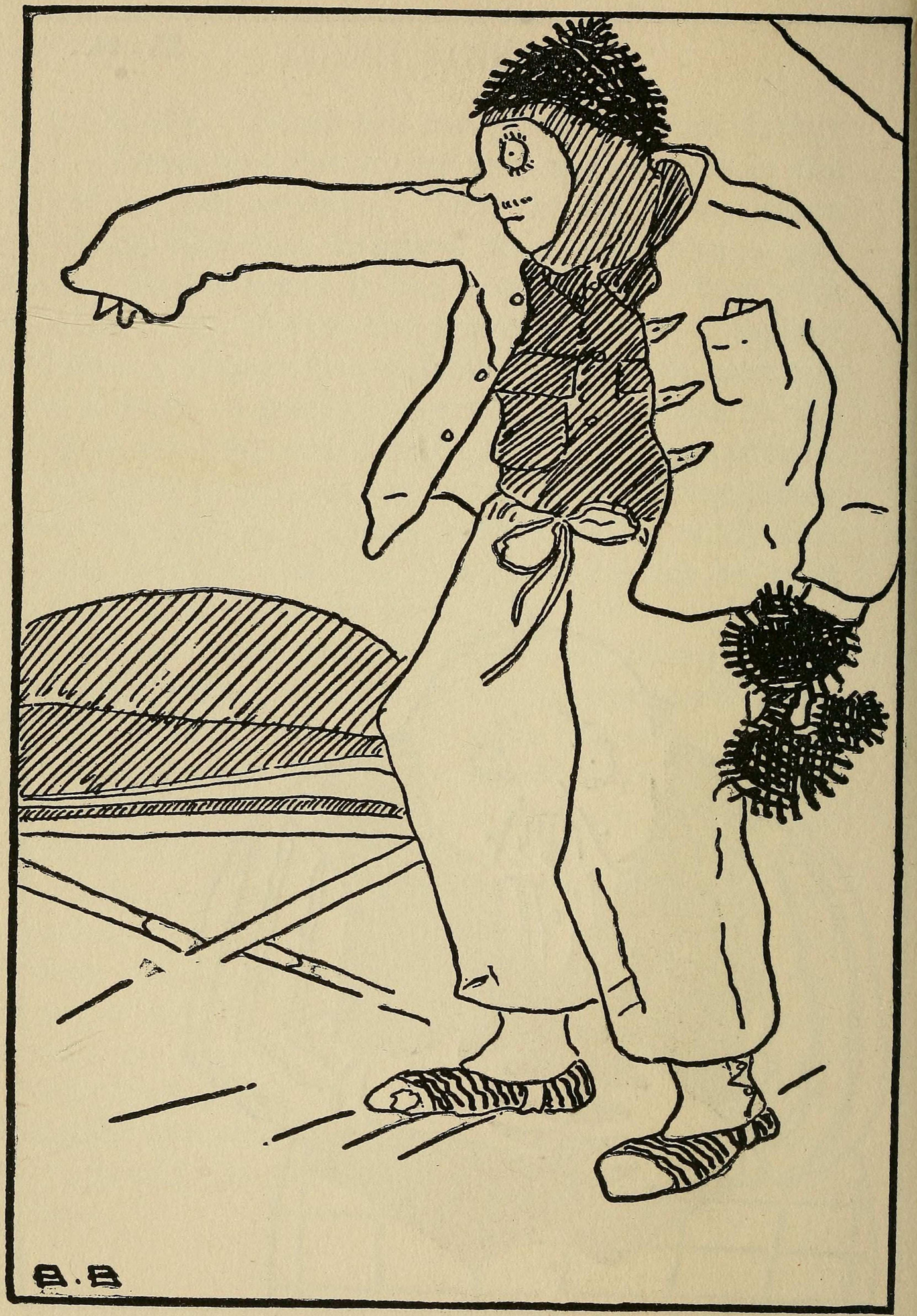
tacks lately. These are not the kind your father has. These are more like the open places in the street on 6th avenoo. Only in the army when anything like this happens they give you a gas mask. A gas mask is like a cracked ice bag with windos in it. An in the front they got a cigaret holder. I always heard how the French was cigaret feends. I guess it got so bad they put in the holders sos they could smoke during a gas attack.

Im goin to put on my mask an have my pictur took en cabinet. Thats nothin to do with furniture, Mable. Its the French for what its goin to look like when its done.

The gas fello said the other day that gas was perfectly safe cause you could always tell when it was comin. You could hear it escape or see it or smell it. The only trouble was, he said, that when the gas started the machine guns made so much noise you couldnt hear it an it always came at night sos you couldnt see it and when you smelled it it was most to late to bother anyhow. I been thinkin that over. Seems to me theres a joker in the contract somewhere. Ask your father to read it over an see if it sounds droit (thats French for right) to him. Better still. Ask Higgins the grocer to give it the once over. Hes got a grand tete as the French say when they mean brains.



"NOT THE KIND YOUR FATHER HAS"



"I WEAR THEM EVERY NIGHT OVER MY UNIFORM"

Its getting frappayer and frappayer down here (meaning colder and colder). It got so cold that I put on those sox that you nitted me. I guess I wont any more though. I guess my feet are going to look like corderoy the rest of my life. Youll understand no hard feelin I know. You know how delicate my feet is an how I cant afford to prennez a hazard with them.

Thank your mother for the flannel pajammas. I wear them every night over my uniform. I got to quit now an read some pictur post cards that some girls sent me.

Good night
(or as the French say Robe de Nuit).

Dere Mable:

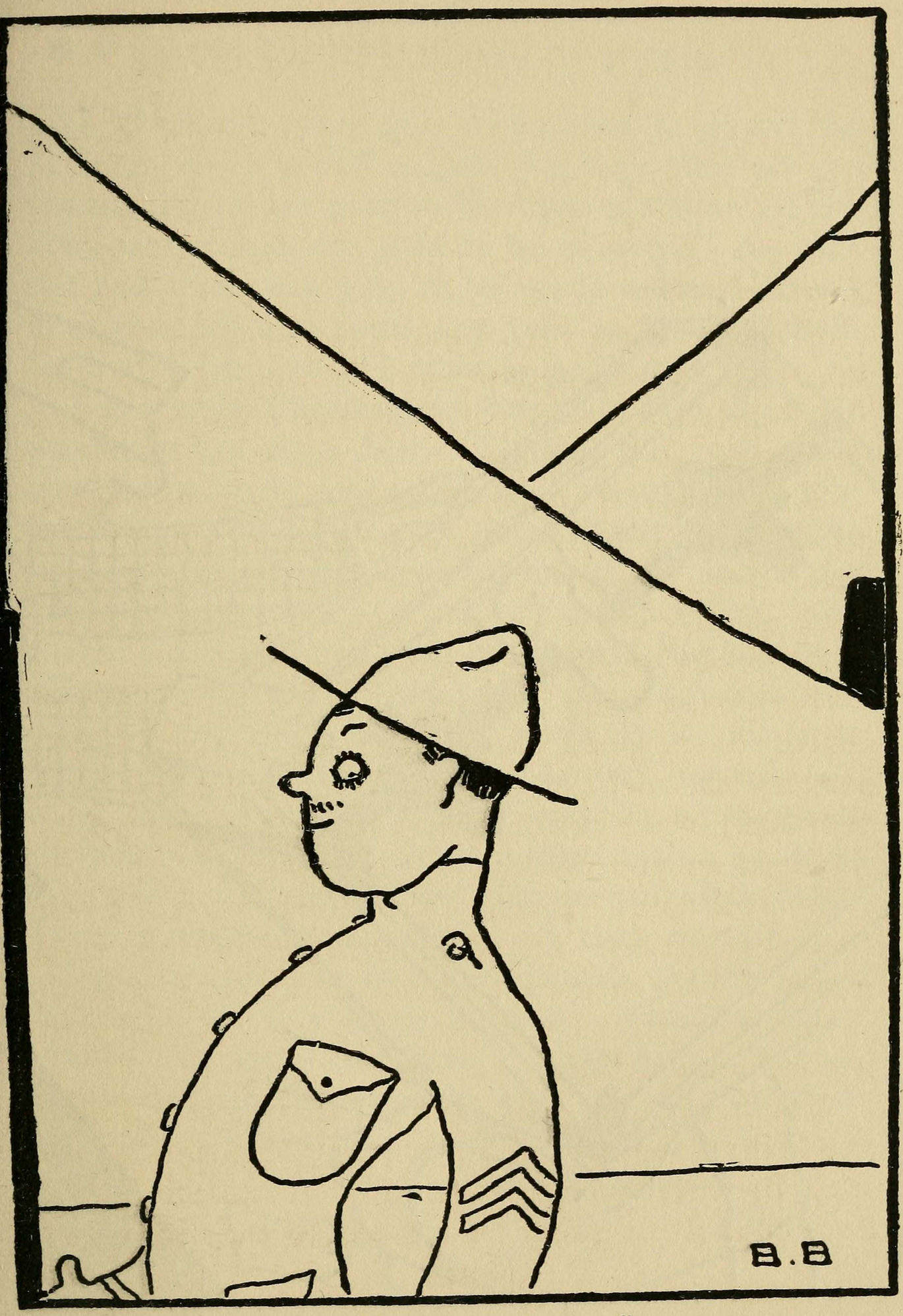
I havnt rote for some time because I been made an officer.—a corperal. I admit I deserved it. I didn't apply for it or nothin though. They just come and told me.

Bein corperal means I dont have nothin more to do with details. An at the same time I got more details than ever. Thats a sort of a joke that us military men understand. You couldnt get it probably Mable. Its tecknickle.

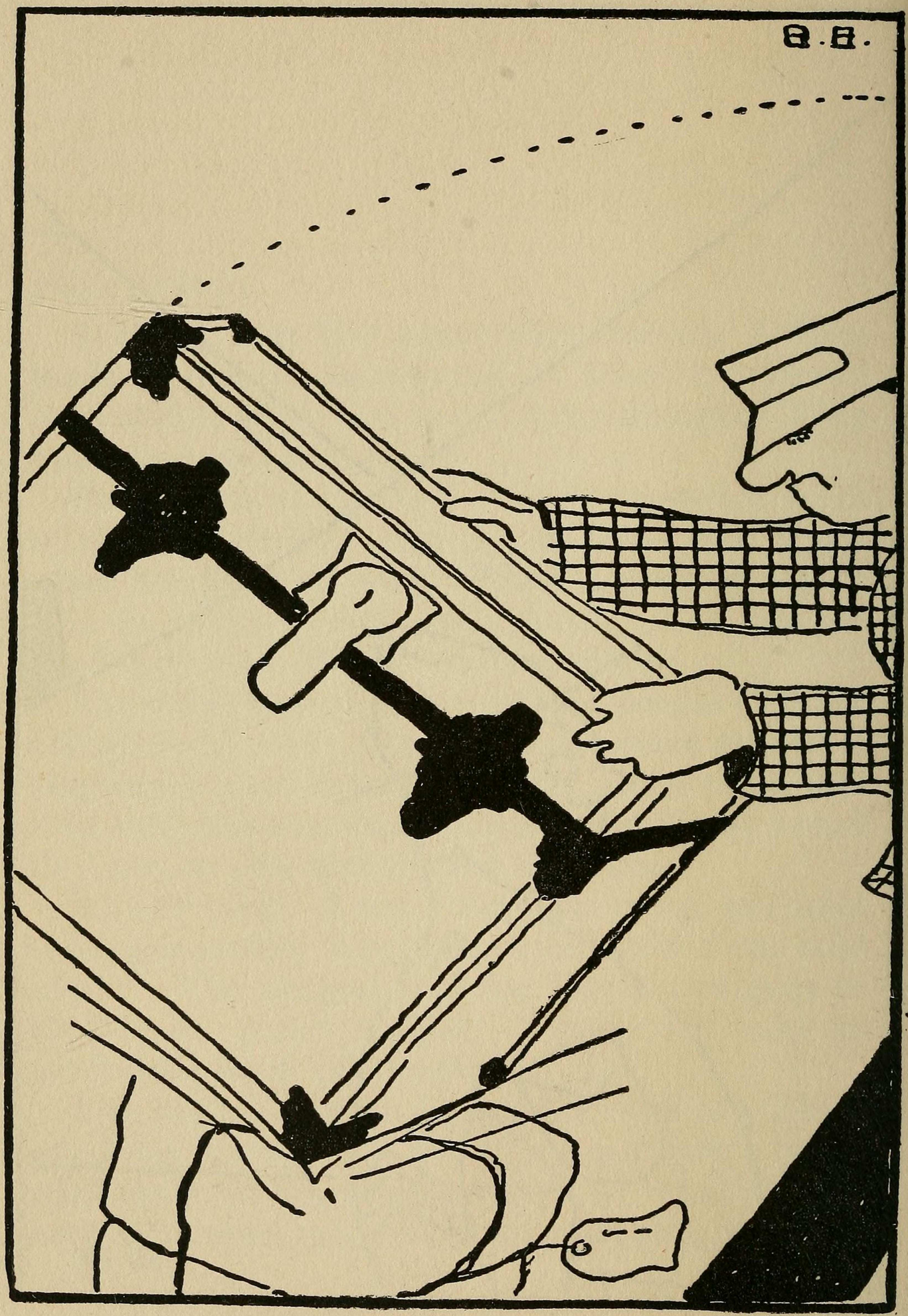
Yesterday being Sunday me an a couple of other officers borrowed a couple of mules from the stable sargent an went for a ride. We saw a cabin that they said was a moonshiners hut but it was broad daylight so you couldnt tell of course.

Its still cold. I wish theyd hurry up and issue those gas masks. Theyd come in handy these cold nights. The sargent told me that I was goin to do interior guard tonight. I guess Im lucky to get indoor work this wether.

You never saw such a place for roomors. These are army roomors. They havnt got nothin to do with the kind your mother used to take in. We here that were going next week an that were not



"I BEEN MADE AN OFFICER"



"SOMEBODIED SET A TRUNK ON THE TURKY"

goin at all but were goin to be used to guard the Chicago stock yards. Then we here that all the mounted men are goin to be dismounted an all the dismounted men are goin to be mounted. An that the rest of us are goin to be made cooks. An we here that all non coms are goin to be abolished. Its awful hard to tell what is goin on.

I got your Thanksgivin box two days ago. It was only ten days late. I guess the post office must have made some mistake. Things is usually later than that. It was in good shape except that the insides had been squoze out of the mince pie and somebodied set a trunk on the turky. Of course I divided it up with my squad. Big hearted. Thats me all over. Im awful popular with my men. They offen say they wish Id be made a Major or somethin. My men ate up all the stuff. All I saved for my self was the white meat an half a mince pie. It certainly tastes good in the field. Of course we aint in nobodies field. Thats a military expreshun. I cant explain it.

I got to quit now an post a guard. At the same time Ill post this letter to you. Thats a joke, Mable. Im sorry this letter cant be longer but as a man rises in the army he gets less an less time to hisself. Olive oil.

Yours faithlessly,

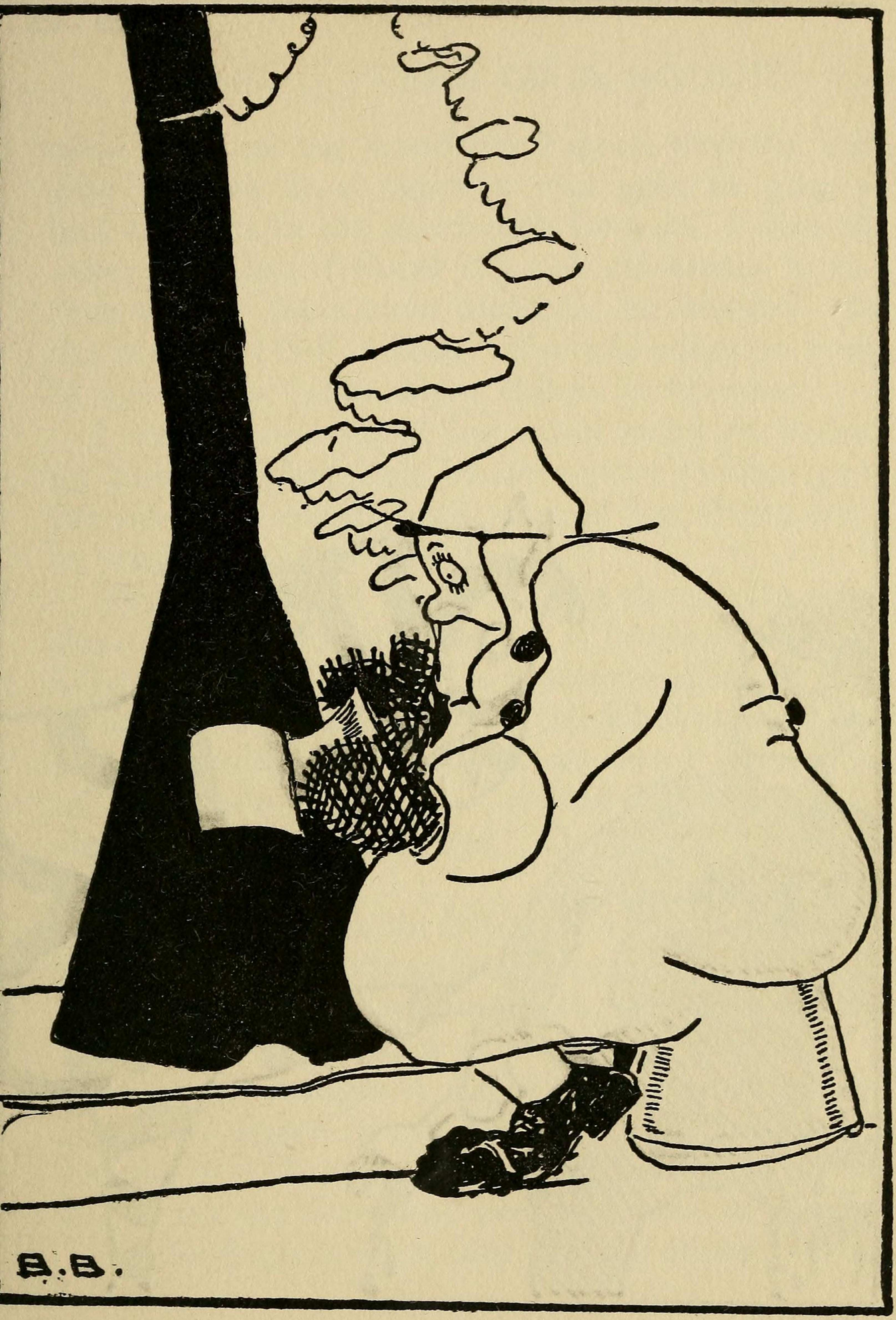
Bill.

Mon Cherry Mable:

Thats the way the French begin there love letters. Its perfectly proper. I would have rote you sooner but me an my fountin pens been froze for a week. Washington will never know how lucky he was that he got assigned to valley Forge instead of here. It got us out of drill for a couple of days. Thats somethin. I guess Id rather freeze than drill. Its awful when they make you do both though.

Two of my men has gone home on furlos. Me bein corperal I took all there blankets. The men didnt like it but I got a squad of men to look out for an my first duty is to keep fit. Duty first. Thats me all over. I got so many blankets now that I got to put a book mark in the place I get in at night or Id never find it again.

We spent most of our time tryin to find somethin to burn up in the Sibly stoves. A sibly stove, Mable, is a piece of stove pipe built like the leg of a sailurs trowsers. Old man Sibly must have had a fine mind to think it out all by hisself. They say he got a patent on it. I guess that must have been a slack winter in Washington. The govern-



"BUILT LIKE THE LEG OF A SAILURS TROWSERS"

"YOU PAINT A HORSE BLACK AND WHITE STRIPES"

ment gives us our wood but I guess that the man who decided how much it was goin to give us had an office in the Sandwitch Islands. I says the other day that if theyd dip our allowance in fus-frus wed at least have matches, eh Mable? Im the same old Bill, Mable. Crackin jokes an keep-in everybody laffin when things is blackest.

I was scoutin round for wood today an burned up those military hair brushes your mother gave me when we came away. I told her theyd come in mighty handy some day.

They say a fello tried to take a shouer the other day. Before he could get out it froze round him. Like that fello in the bible who turned into a pillo of salt. They had to break the whole thing offen the pipe with him inside it an stand it in front of the stove. When it melted he finished his shouer an said he felt fine. Thats how hard were gettin, Mable.

I bought a book on Minor Tackticks the other day. Thats not about underaged tacks that live on ticks as you might suppose, Mable. Its the cience of movin bodies of men from one place to another. I thought it might tell of some way of gettin the squad out of bed in the morning but it doesnt. All the important stuff like that is camoo-flaged sos the Germans wont get onto it.

Camooflage is not a new kind of cheese Mable.

Its a military term. Camooflage is French for cauliflower which is a disguised cabbage. It is the same thing as puttin powder on your face instead of washin it. You deceive Germans with it. For instance you paint a horse black and white stripes an a German comes along. He thinks its a picket fence an goes right by. Or you paint yourself like a tree an the Germans come an drink beer round you an tell military sekruts.

Well I guess its time to say Mery Xmas now Mable. I guess it wont be a very Mery Xmas withut me there, eh? Cheer up cause Im goin to think of you whenever I get time all day long. Im pretty busy nowdays. I got to watch the men work. It keeps a fello on the jump all the time. I like it though, Mable. Thats me all over. Isnt it?

Dont send me nothin for Christmas, Mable. I bought somethin for you but Im not going to tell you cause its a surprize. All that I can say is that it cost me four eighty seven ($4.87) which is more than I could afford. An its worth a lot more. But you know how I am with money. A spend drift. So dont send me anything please although I need an electric flash light, some cigarets, candy an one of them sox that you wear on your head. Ill spend my last sent on anyone I

like but I dont want to be under no obligations. Independent. Thats me all over.

You might read this part to your mother. I dont want nothing from her ether.

Rite soon an plain Mable, cause I dont get much chance to study.

Yours till the south is warm,

Bill.

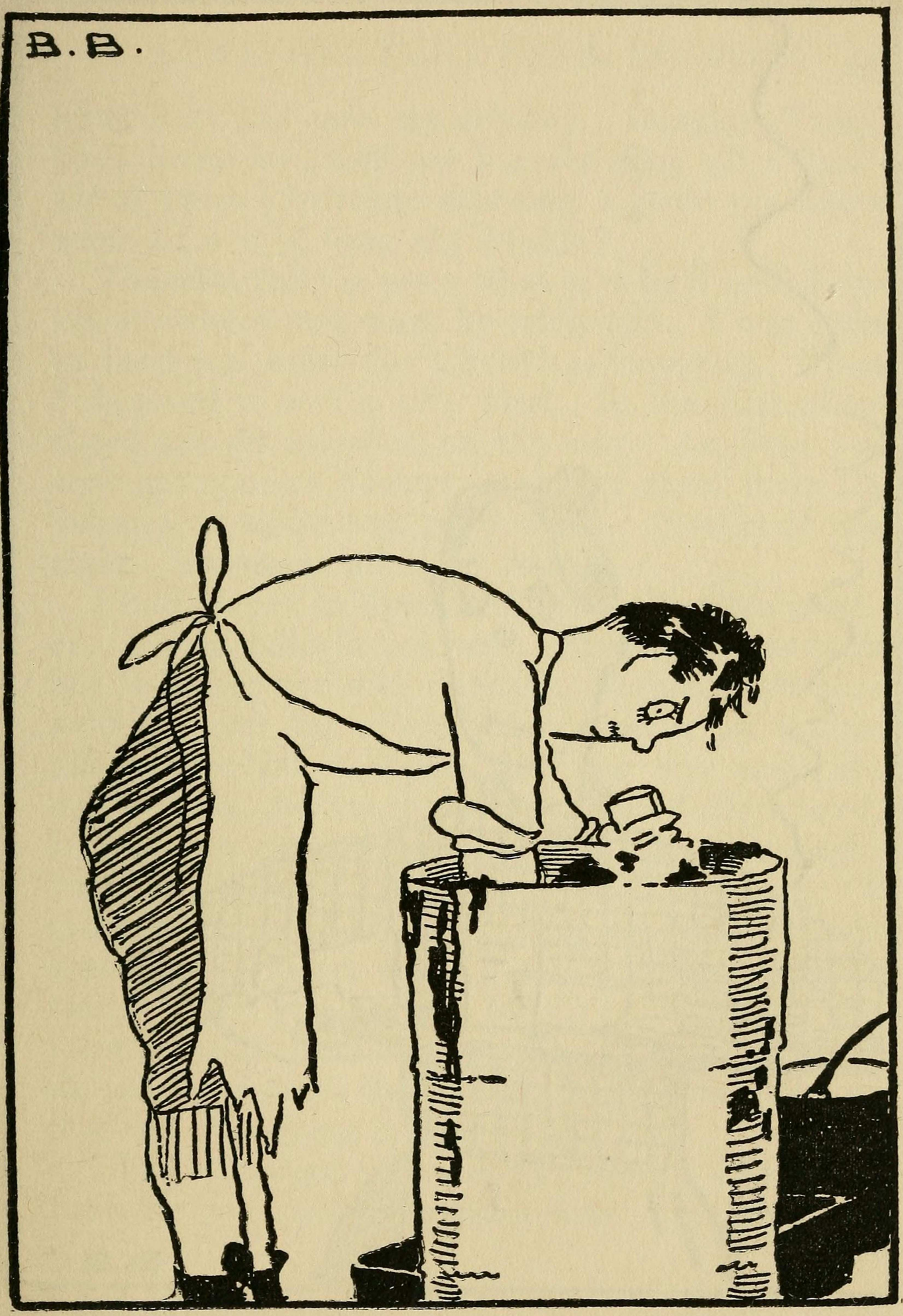
Your mothers present cost me three seventy seven ($3.77).

Joli Dame:

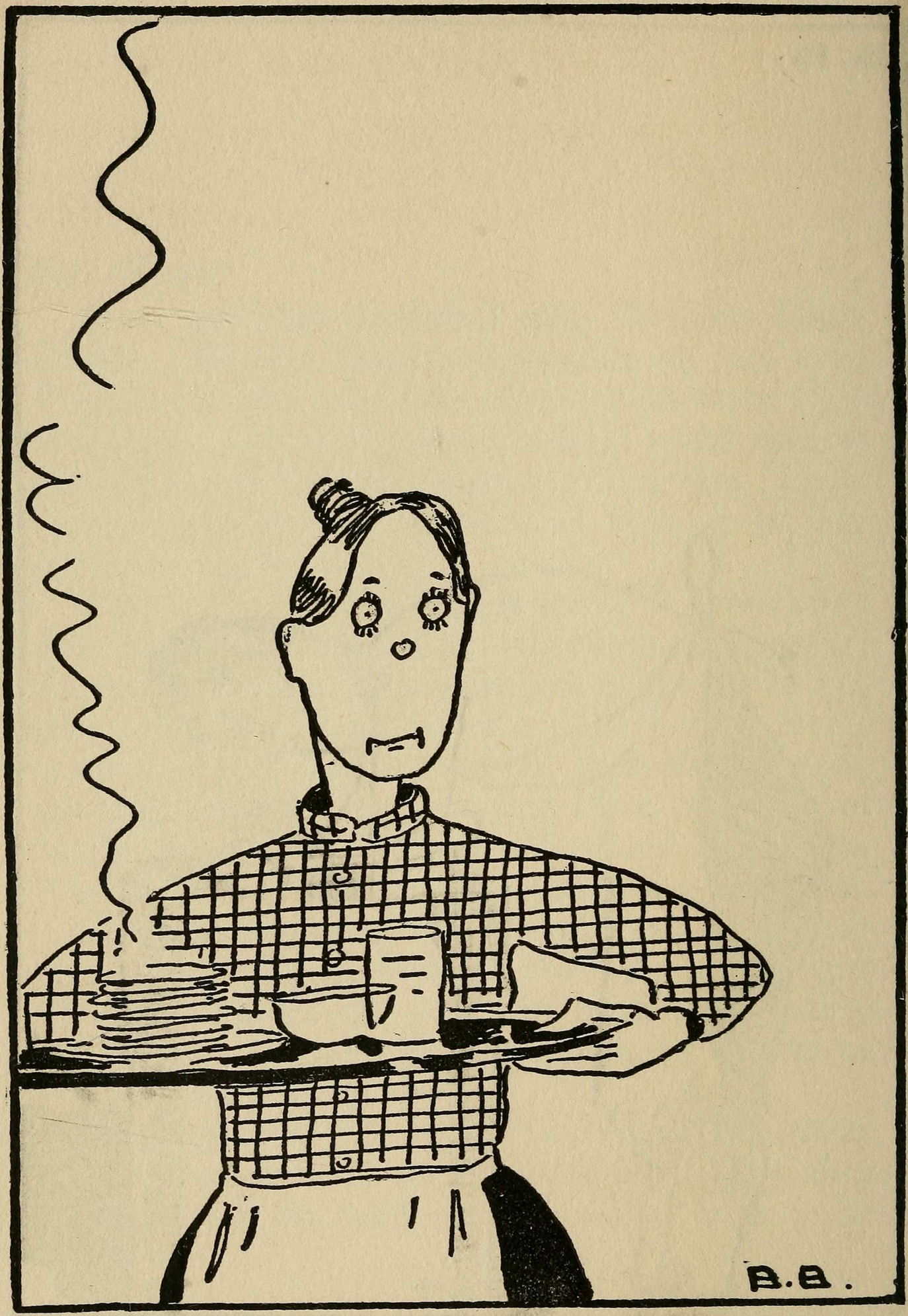
Dont get that confused with Tinkers Dam, Mable. Tinkers Dam is tecknickle an aint even French. I wish you knew more about these forin languiges. I always herd a fello could express himself better in French than anything else. Thats because nobody can understand him an he can say anything he wants.

The Christmas holidays is over. I spent mine doin Kitchen police. The only thing what pealed for me Christmas morning was potatoes an the only thing what rung out was dish cloths. But I guess you aint familiar enough with the poets to get that, Mable. It shows that I can be funny an bright though even under adversary conditions. Kitchen police dont explain what I do very well. I dont walk a beet or carry a club or arrest nobody or nothin. I just—well I wish that hired girl of yours could come down an do Kitchen police for a couple of days. She wouldnt be quitten as regular as she does.

We celebrated Christmas by sleepin till a quarter to seven instead of hap past six. Only they forgot to tell the fello what blows the horn an he



"I SPENT MINE DOIN KITCHEN POLICE"



"I WISH THAT HIRED GIRL COULD COME DOWN"

blew it at hap past six anyway. Imagine if anybody home had told me I could sleep till a quarter of seven Christmas morning. I guess you know what Id a told him, eh, Mable?

Theres a fello in town what says he'll send flowers anywhere you want by telegraph. I was goin to send you some for Christmas morning. Then I figgered it was a silly idea. In the first place theyd get all smashed on the way. An then you cant get enough flowers in one of them little envelopes to make one good smell. Nothin if not right. Thats me all over, Mable.

I had dinner in town with Max Glocoses mother. Hes a fello in our tent. Shes a nice enough old lady but she aint military, Mable. We was walkin down the street before dinner an salutin officers so fast it looked like we was scratchin our forheds. An every time we saluted she bowed. I didnt say nothin cause after all she was payin for the dinner. Later on though she says, "I think its fine you boys has made so many friends among the officers cause I think there such nice men." Can you beat it Mable? An when she went home she sent Max an officers hat cord cause she said she didnt think it would fade as quick as that old blue thing he was wearin.

I like to forgot to thank you for the Christmas presents you an your mother sent. Im glad you

minded what I said about not wantin nothin although Id sent you two presents what was worth more than I could afford ($4.87). As I said to Joe Loomis who was in the tent when your presents came, it aint what the thing cost or wether you could ever use it for anything. Its the thought. Sentiment before pleasure. Thats me all over, Mable.

Thanks for the red sweter, Mable. We aint allowed to use them. But you dont want to feel bad about that cause I got lots of others an didnt need it anyway. An tell your mother thanks for the preserves an cake. I think thats what they was. They must have packed them between a steam roller and a donkey engin from the looks. Joe Loomis picked out most of the glass an tried some. Hed eat anything, that fello, Mable. He said it must have been pretty good when it started. Tell that to your mother. I know it will please her.

I got so many presents from other girls an the like that its kind of hard to remember if you sent me anything else. If you did just tell me in your next letter and Ill thank you when I rite again.

I hope my presents arrived all right. I guess you'll like em. You ought to at the price. As I says to the girl what sold em when she says she didnt have nothin cheaper "Nothins to good for

where there goin." Isnt that tipical of me, Mable?

Well, Mable, perhaps next year Ill send you a Dutch helmit maybe. It aint no use wishin you a happy New Year cause I know how itll be with me away an your father what he is.

Yours regardless,

Bill.

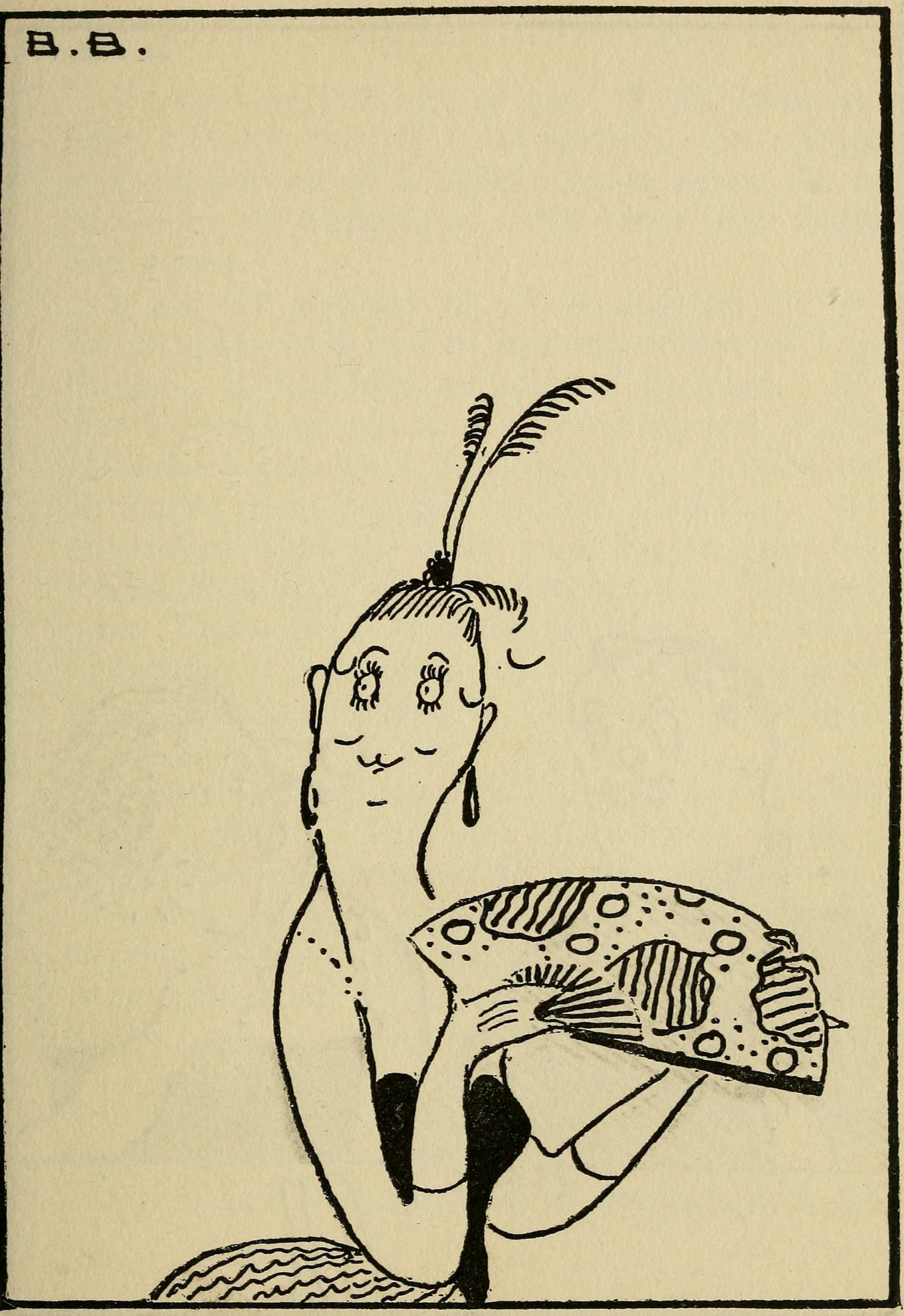
Mon Croquette:

Thats not the kind with the evenin dress tooth pick in the top, Mable. A croquette is a French society woman. Study these letters of mine an see how I use the words. You ought to be able to pick up enough French to understand me talkin it when I come home.

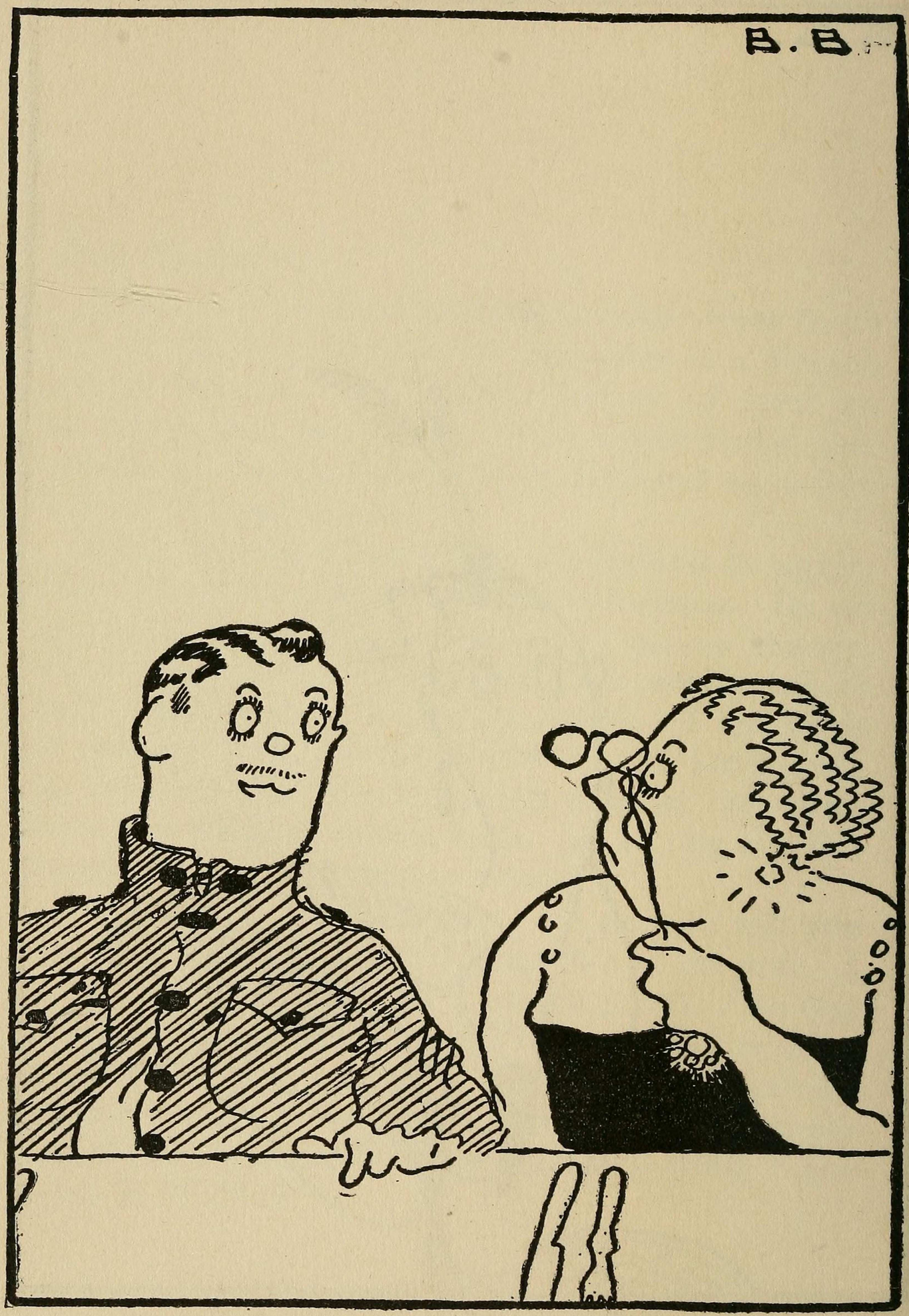
Well, Mable, New Years are behind us again. Once more I made a lot of revolushuns. Its no use sayin there wasnt nothin for me to change. Youre prejudiced. I can see falts where others cant. Underneath a plesant exterior I am made of sterner stuff, as the poets say. I have gave up frivolity with the exception of goin into town once in a while to take a bath. Im strong for this sanity stuff under any conditions.

Im makin a study of war. Im goin to tell you a sekrut. Im workin on a plan to end the war. I got thinkin, as I will, an it struck me that no one had gone into this at all. There all figurin how to go on with it but none of em how to quit it. Dont say nothin till I get it worked out. I guess you always knew youd here from me when I got goin, eh Mable?

B.B.



"A CROQUETTE IS A FRENCH SOCIETY WOMAN"



"I SAT NEXT TO A COLONELS WIFE"

I also resolved not to put off till tomorrow what I can do today. (Old motto.) For instance if I can get out of a fatigue today whats the use of waitin till tomorrow. The same with sleepin and restin.

I cut out cigarets to. I was gettin to be a feend. Got so I had to lite one whenever I got thinkin. I was usin up most a package a day. Nervous an high strung. Thats me all over, Mable. I smoke cigars an a pipe instead. A fello with an active mind has got to have somethin. You remember what the fello what trained the high school show said when he saw me act. Temperature. Thats me. Of course its harder to borrow pipe tobacco and cigars but Im tryin to show the fellos how bad cigarets is. Pretty soon Ill be all O.K. again.

I got that watch your father sent me for a New Years present. Tell him thanks very much an not to feel bad because he forgot to send me a Christmas present cause this wipes out the debt entirely. He said it was a military watch an the latest thing out. I guess they call it a military watch cause it works two hours and stops four. Its the latest thing round here. If I answered call by that watch Id be fallin in for retreat round taps. Its so slow it cant stop quick.

I got the blacksmith over at headquarters com-

pany workin on it now. Hes an awful good man. He was a plumber in civilian life. Thats why they made him a blacksmith when he joined the army. He says hes goin to fix it sos Ill never be bothered with it again.

I got asked to a dinner New Years night. I sat next to a Colonels wife. It was kind of embarassing at first. I put her easy though. I says whose that funny lookin old bird sittin across the room with a head like an egg. Hes very chic isnt he? (Thats a French joke Mable.) She says "Thats my husband." As soon as Id stopped laffin I started right in an told her the history of every man in the company beginnin with the As. You know me when I get started. I didnt give her no chanst to get embarassed. When she started to say somethin I just kept right on talkin just to show her that bein a Colonels wife she wasnt expected to make no effort.

I made good, Mable. I guess you kno I would. After dinner I heard her ask somebody who invited me. Then she said somethin like "Hed ought to be known better." Never miss a chance. Thats me all over. It may mean promoshun or anything. It may be that shell have me sent to Fort Silly to learn somethin. You cant tell.

I cant think of anything more that you would understand. Dont show these letters to kno one.

There is to many spize around. I suppose you are awful lonesome without me. I dont get much time to be lonesome what with drillin an goin out somewhere. As soon as things get shook down a bit I hope to get more time to miss you. Hows your fathers liver?

Au Riviere,

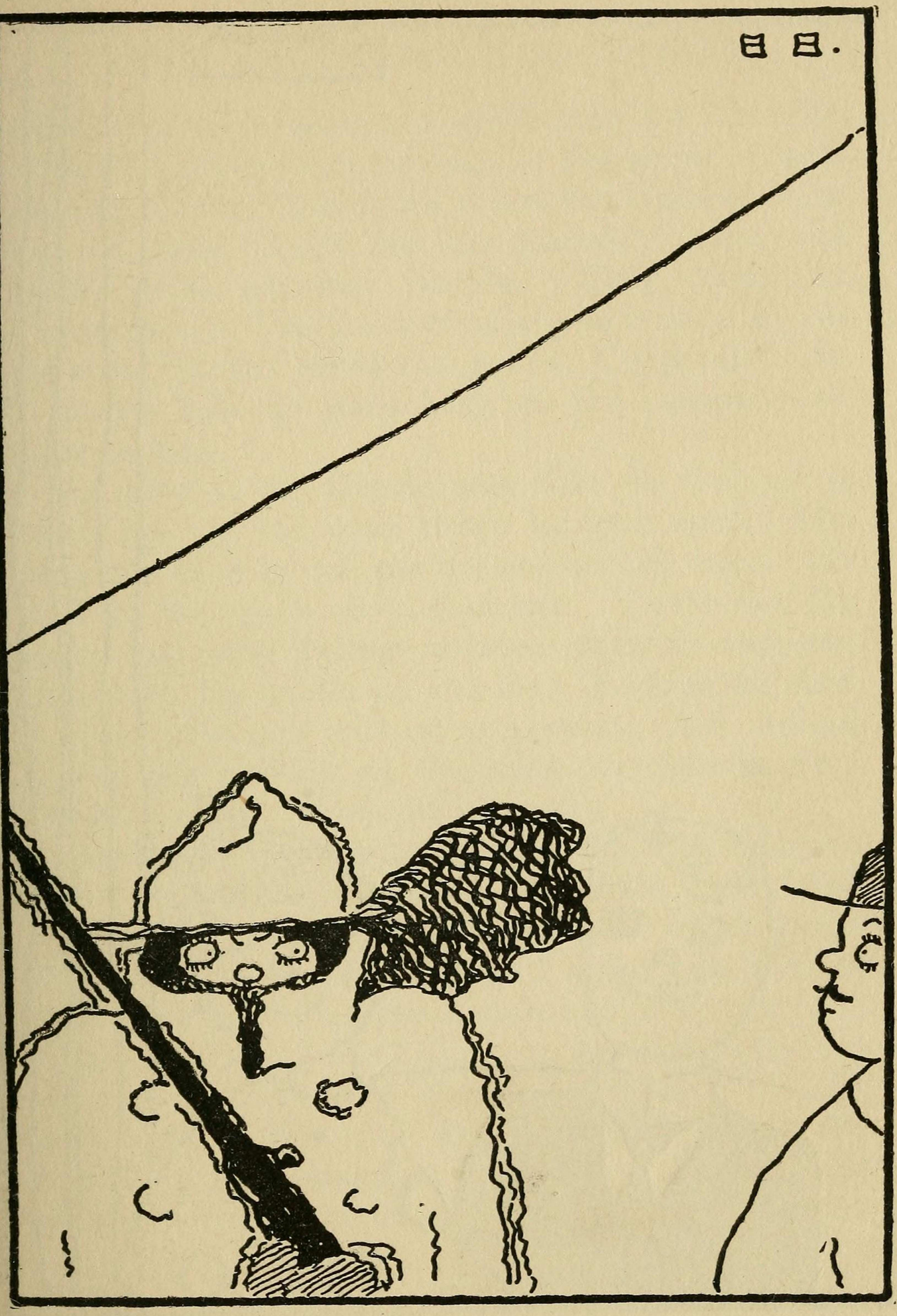
Bill.

Mon Ami:

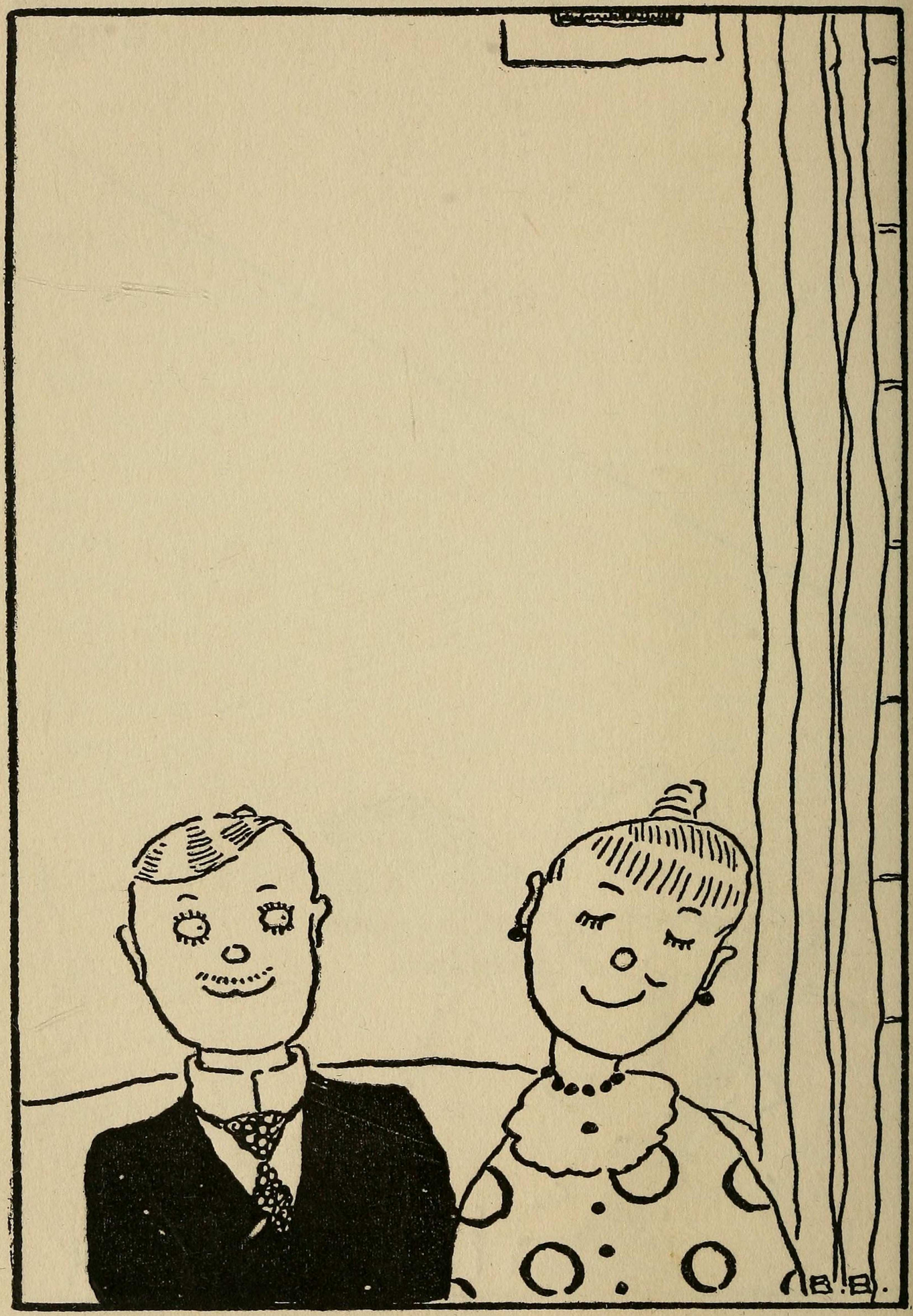
Sounds like a scourin pouder, doesnt it, Mable? As a matter of fact its the way a French lady talks to a fello shes awful fond of.

Im not an officer any more. I was just goin to resine anyways. The Captins been watchin me rise an he didnt like it. He knew I knew more than him as well as me. Always askin me questions. Id always tell him cause I knew he had a wife and children in Jersey City an so I was sorry for them. Soft. Thats me all over. But the other day when I was on guard he says, "Corperal, whats the General orders?" an I says, "Captin if you dont kno them now you never will and I wouldnt be doin no service to my country if I told you." Cold but civil, Mable. You kno how I can be.

The Captin just felt cheap an walked away. I kind of felt sorry for him. Almost told him so once or twice. Then I went on guard again. I go on guard a lot. The men like me to be corperal of the guard because when the relief goes out I take all their blankets an go right to sleep instead of standin outside an watchin them freeze.



"MEN HATE TO BE WATCHED WHILE THEY ARE FREEZIN"



"I HAD A REPUTASHUN FOR A DEVIL WITH THE WIMEN"

Men hate to be watched while they are freezin.

But I happened to be outside for some reason, goin to dinner I guess, an I saw the Colonel coming. I says "Turn out the guard." (No one really turns em out, Mable. They come out themselves.) The Colonel sees who it is an waves an says "Never mind the guard, Corperal." So I thanks him an goes back to the company an goes to bed.

As soon as the Captin sees that the Colonel is savin me up for over there he gets sore. His plan has been to kill me before we left here. He said he was goin to reduce me. Thats not the same way your father reduces when he cuts out beer with his meals an sits in a Turkish all day. I never said you will or you wont. Just waited till he got outside an thumbed my nose at him. High spirited. Thats me all over.

An English officer came over the other day an told us all about the war. He didnt quite finish it cause he only had three quarters of an hour. They was quite a few things I didnt kno even at that. He said that the heavy artillery was commanded by the C.C.O.D.A. an the light artillery by the C.O.A An theres a special N.C.O. who has nothin to do but look after the S.A.A. Just imagine, Mable. I wish Id studied chemistree more when I was in school.

It would make things a lot easier for me now. Then he said that a man always got into his O.O. to observe the action of the 75s. These English are always great for dress an that formal stuff.

Im glad there tellin us this before we go over. It would have been awful embarassing to have tried to observe the action of the 75s in my B.V.Ds. I asked him if they had any trouble with the B.P.O.Es. When he left he said "Cheero." Without winkin a hair I says "Beevo." Same old Bill, eh Mable?

They said the other day that my name was on a list to go to school an learn all about liason. I said there wasnt much use in there doin that cause I was pretty well up on that stuff. At home, I says, I had a reputashun for a devil with the wimen. Nobody knows better than you, eh Mable? I guess thats a little over your head though, Mable. I try to be as simple as I can. If Im not just tell me.

Im ritin this letter with my shoes off. I hope youll excuse my bein so informal but Im havin the old trouble with my feet. They never been right since that winter I taught you to dance. I went to the doctor with them an he said to keep offen them as much as I could. So they put me to work scrubbin the mess shack on my hans and nees. I bet if a fello had both legs shot off theyd prop

you up against the wall an put you peelin onions.

I got to quit now. They got a thing called retreat they have every night. I always like to be there just to show the Captin Im behind him regardless.

Im sendin you my pictur in a uniform pointin to an American flag. Its kind of simbolical the man said, if you know what that is. I thought youd like to put it on the mantle in a conspikuous place sos to have somethin to be proud of when your girl friend comes in to talk. Id ask you for your pictur only I havnt got much room for that kind of thing down here.

yours exclusively

Bill.

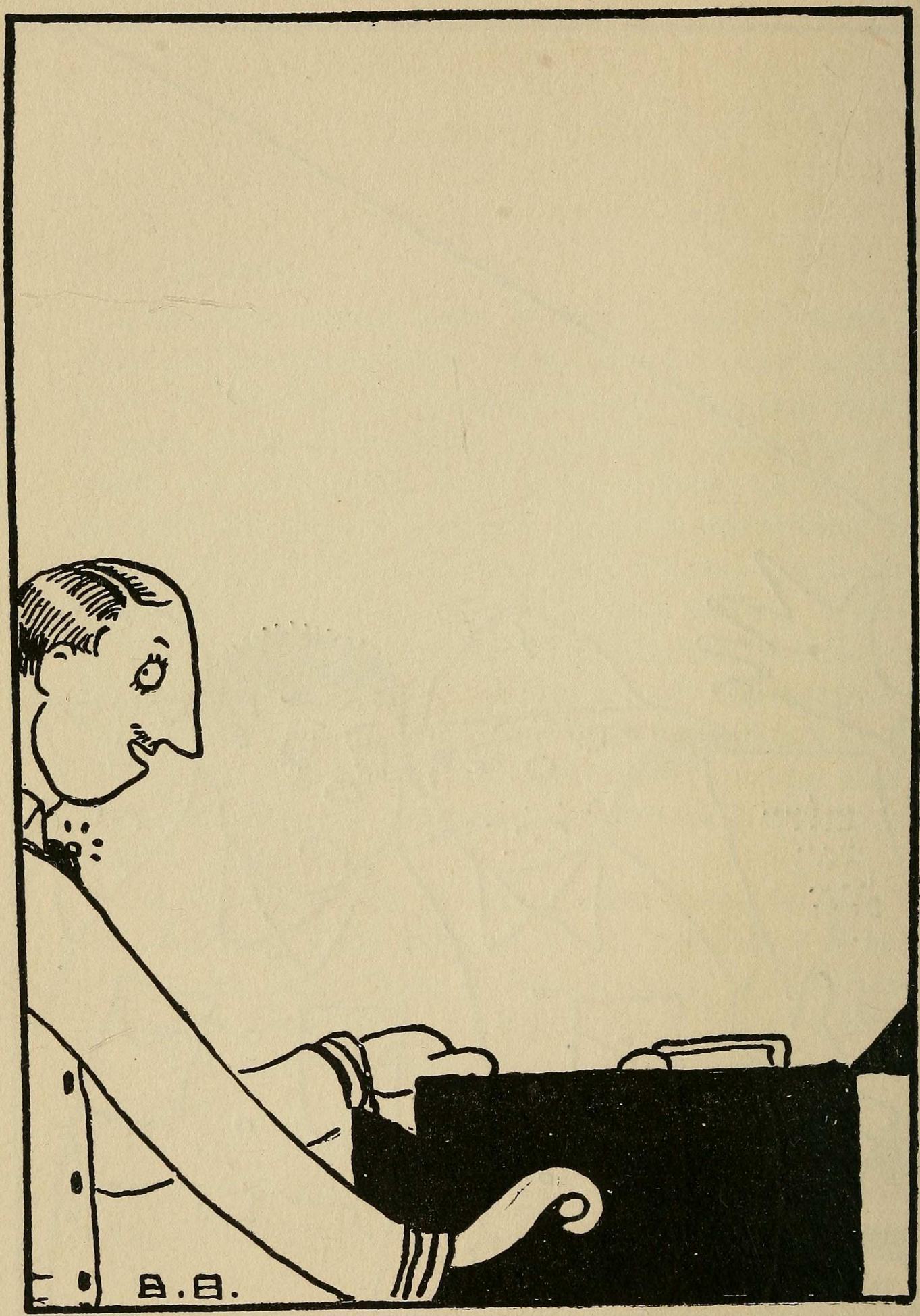
Dere Mable:

Everyone round here is goin to school now so they can be speshulists. Not the kind your mother goes to, Mable. A speshulist only does one thing. I been doin everything round here ever since I came. I was gettin sick of it. I went to the top sargent an says I guessed Id be a speshulist to. He said all right he'd make me a food speshulist. Said Id have to go into it pretty deep. I been into it up to my elbows in the kitchen ever since. Never trust sargents. Least of all top sargents. If it keeps on like this there wont be nobody to do the actual fightin but me, Mable. Its too much responsibilety for one man. Suppose I was to get sick or somethin.

An then a bunch of fellos went away to lern to be officers. That kind of struck my fancy it bein about the only thing I hadnt done round here. I went to the Captin an told him I thought Id go to. He said I could go to, and then he added somethin.

He said a company was built up somethin like a man. There was the brain, which was the officers, and then some was the muscle an some was

"IT SEEMED TO DEPRES THEM AWFUL"



"IF I CATCH ONE OF THOSE AILIN ENEMIES WINDIN UP YOUR VICTROLA"

the bone. He said I seemed to be pretty well fitted for my part by nature so he wouldnt change me. Ive always been strong ever since I was a kid, Mable.

Ive .rote a pome. I sent it to the Divisun paper. They wouldnt print it cause they said it was so real that it might depres the men. I guess they was right cause I read it to the fellos in the tent an it seemed to depres them awful. Im ritin it to you. Its about the war. Youll probably notice that yourself if you read it careful. Here it is.

I

Here the thunder of the guns
Smashin down the German Huns
An the sticky pools of gory blood
Soakin up the oozie sod
The rushin, roarin, shreekin boom
Of bullets crashin thru the gloom

II

Listen to those grate bums bust
On the quiverin Hunnish crust
Listen to the shreekin, moanin,
Swearin, yellin, gruntin, groanin
That comes to us across the trenches
All mixed up with grusome stenches

III

Biff, an from there hellish lare
The shreeks of Germans rent the air.
Bloody lims lie on the ground.
Bits of Huns go flyin round.
Bang! And through the cannons roar
Is plainly herd the splashin gore.

IV

But this cannot go on for long,
Cause Uncle Sam is comin strong.
And when we charge the German line
We'll chuck the dam thing in the Rine.
An blood an slauter, rape an gore
In Bel Le France will rain no more.

Aint that terrible, Mable? I read it to one fello an he said it made him absolutely sick. He said he didn't see how I could rite it without gettin sick myself. Just between me and you Mable I did come pretty near being once or twice when I was ritin it.

Most of all thats confidential but I dont care if you read it to some of your friends just to give em a good idea of what war is. Some of the things aint very nice of course. If your ritin big stuff

though you got to put in everything that comes into your head or else you lose the punch. I think the ends the best. A lot of fellos has said that. We ought to have more of that. It gets the slackers.

The Rine is a German river where they make wine near Berlin, Mable.

You keep menshuning a fello named Broggins in your letters. Now I aint got a spark of jelusy in my nature. Big. Thats me all over, Mable. But I warn you frankly. If I ever catch one of those ailin enemies windin up your victrola Ill kick him out of the house. Thats only fair. It isn't that I care a snap. Theres plenty of girls waitin for me. Its just the principul of the thing.

Dont think for a minit that I care. I just menshun it cause I couldnt think of nothin else to say.

Yours till you here otherwise,

Bill.

Pom de mon oie:

You say that like oie yoy in Yiddish. It means apple of my eye. I never saw an apple in nobody's eye, Mable, but I guess thats some French custom.

Great news, Mable. A fello whats got a friend in the audience department in Washington just told me the wars goin to end about the 15th of Feb. Dont say nothin to nobody about it. It might look as if I was gettin mixed up in politiks. I put in for a furlo on the 5th tho. Then I wont have to come back, eh Mable? Ill bet your glad. Its great to think of gettin into a place where you cant see through the walls and there aint three inches of mud on the floor. An think of not havin to tie the doors together when you come in or crawl underneath em on your hans and nees and not havin to put everything you own in the world under the bed. But I guess you dont care as much about these things as I will.

This would be a good trainin camp for artik explorers. I bet the fello that picks out the camps ether owns a cold storage plant in civil life or else they do it by mail order. It got so cold the other

night the silver in the thermometer disappeared. It aint been seen since.

We got a comical guy in the tent. Bill Huggins. Me and hims a pair. Keep everybody laffin all the time. Bill likes things hot about as well as me. Every nite he fills the Sibly stove so full of wood that he has to hammer the last piece in. It gets so hot that it jumps up and down like a mad monkey. Thats the way Siblys do when they get awful hot. Were not bothered by that much though.

We got another guy thats a fresh air feend. His name is Angus MacKenzie. Hes Scotch. Hes so close himself that he has to have lots of air or hed smother. Every nite he pulls up the side of the tent by his bed. No one likes fresh air in its place better than me, Mable, but when its as fresh as this air is its place is outside.

I wake up in the nite rolled into a ball like a porkypine. Theys things in the middle of my back like his stickers. If I dont move I get cramps. If I do, I freeze. All around the place where Im lyin is as warm as a park bench in winter. Sometimes I forget and push my feet down. That's awful.

One night I thought I heard the horn and stuck my head out of the blankets. It was Angus with his head and one arm outside snorin. Can you

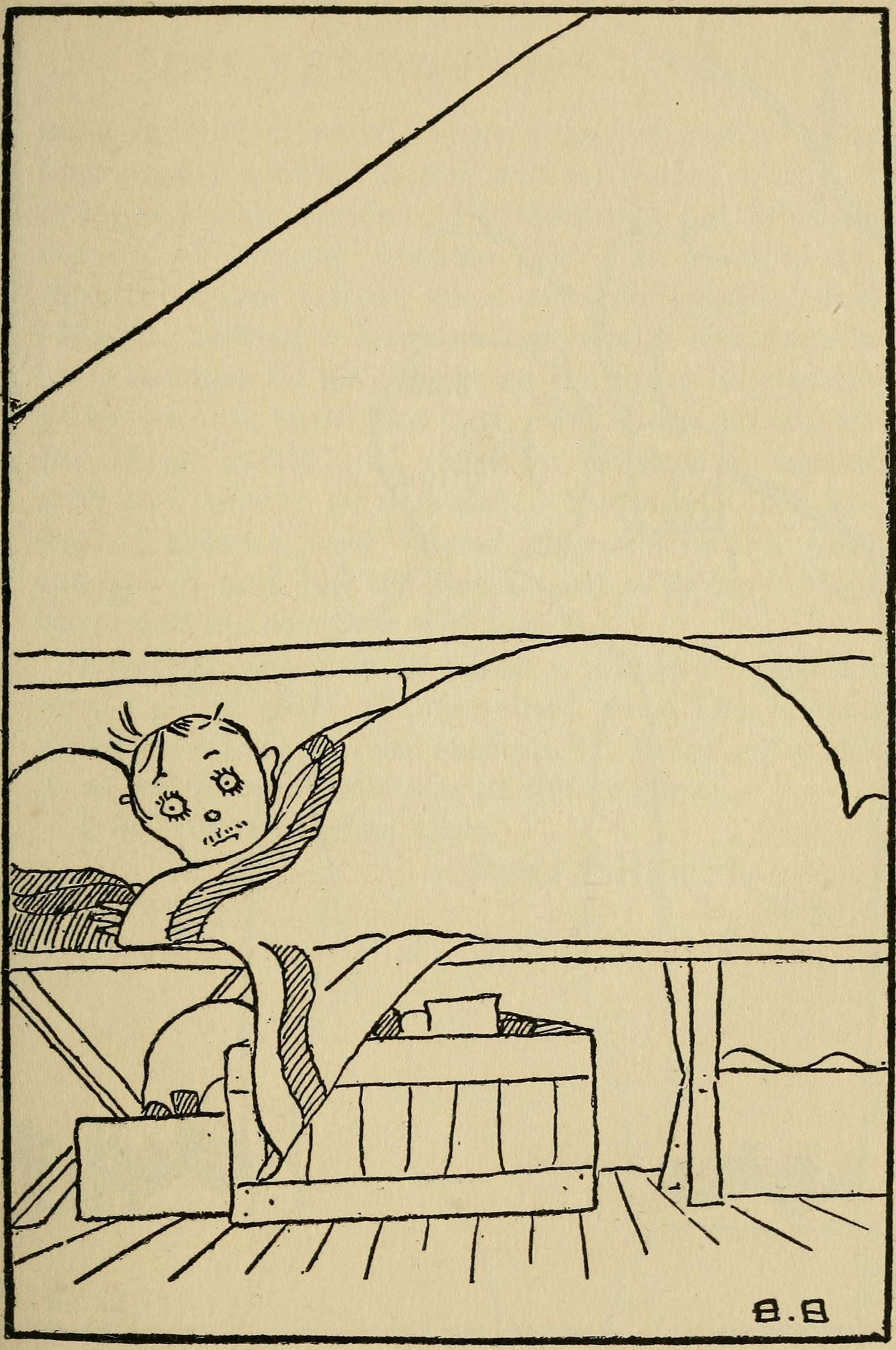
beat that. I bet he swims in the ice all winter home and has his pictur in the Sunday paper. I froze my ear before I could get my head back. Thats the kind of a fello he is.

Its awful cold in the mornin. They blow three calls. The first is just for the slow guys. I can make it nice from the march if I dont take too many close off. Thats no temtashun. One guy jumps up just before assembly and makes a lot of fuss like hes gettin dressed. He dont fool nobody. The only thing he takes off at nite is his hat. Some says that falls off when he gets into bed.

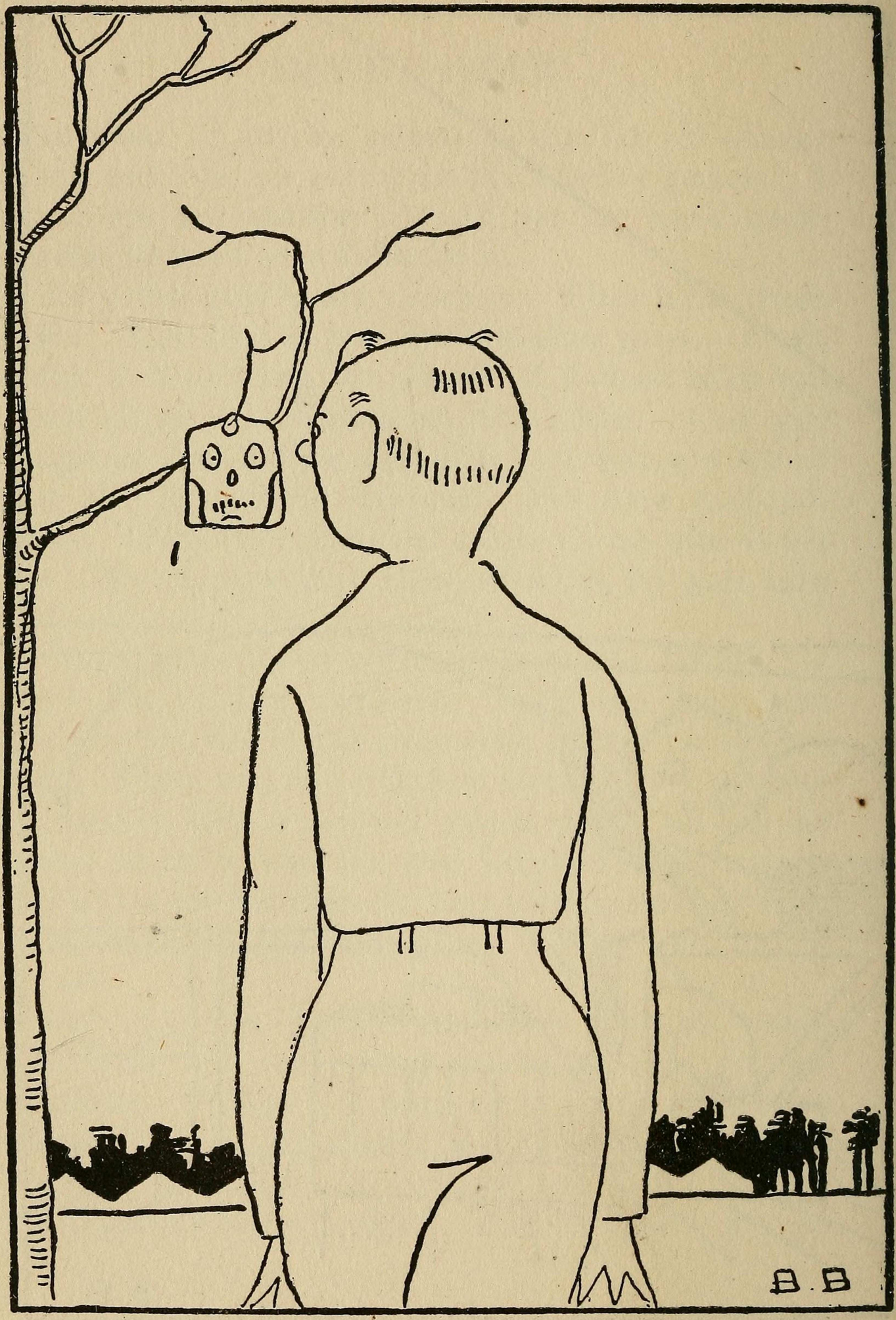
Angus gets up every mornin in his BVDs. I think his skin is furlined. You can hear him smashin the ice in the pale with a hair brush outside. Then you can tell hes washin by the noise he makes like a busted steam pipe. Then he comes smashin into the tent leavin the door open and wipes the ice offen his face with somebody elses towel an says gosh thats great. I hate that kind of a fello.

Bill Huggins cleaned the stove with his towel last week sos everything would be neet for inspecshun. Angus got hold of it in the dark next mornin. Gee, youd haft laft, Mable.

I got the little tin mirror you sent, Mable. Its unbreakable all right. Bill Huggins got so



"STUCK MY HEAD OUT OF THE BLANKETS"



"WHEN I LOOKED IN THE TIN MIRROR I THOUGHT I WAS STARVIN"

mad at it he tried to break it and couldnt. The first time I looked in it I got an awful start. I thought I was starvin. I looked like one of them picturs of hungry Indiens that the mishunaries show you just before they pass the plate. Bill Huggins swiped it later and says why didnt somebody tell him he was gettin so fat cause he couldnt go home on a furlo like that. He didnt eat nothin for three meals and then he looked at hisself with the mirror turned the other way. Its like one of those Coney Island places where a fello can go in and laff at hisself for a dime. Next time send me one that will break.

I got to quit now and buy a couple of pies before I go to bed. I dont sleep good less I have a little somethin on my stummick. Dont say nothin about what I told you in the beginnin.

Until the 15th Feb. then.

Yours faithfully,

Bill.

Dere Mable:

The Captin aint goin to give me my furlo. Says theres an order out against it. Someones got it in for me, Mable. I bought a wooley coat awful cheap from Bill Huggins. Right away theres an order against em. Angus MacKenzie sold me a pair of leather leggins for less than he paid for them. Some bargain from Angus. The next day they issue an order that you cant wear em. Now they hear I want to go home an put an order out against it. If theyd only come right out an say Bill Smith were goin to get you. Sneaky. Thats what I call it, Mable.

Ive half a mind to transfer back to the artillery. If I transfer much more theyll be chargin me extra fare, eh Mable? Only for me an the Captin not bein able to agree Id never have left. I understand hes been awful sorry since. All you have to do in artillery is to put a bullet in the gun. It does the rest. In the infantry you got to go up and do all the dirty work yourself.

Besides Im gettin leery of these infantry fellos. There always talking about what were goin to do to the Germans, blowin em to pieces and slicin em

up an throwin em all around the lot. I got thinkin what if the Germans was learnin there men to do the same thing. They never seem to figger on these things.

An these baynuts, Mable. They aint safe. When you get a lot of fellos in a trench with there baynuts stickin every which way some ones goin to get hurt sure.

I got those cigars your father sent me. Thank him an tell him if he ever gets takin like that again not to send such a large box but—well you explain it to him Mable. You can do that sort of thing much better than I can. Outspoken. Thats me all over, Mable.

Why is it that no matter how fussy a fello was when he wore a vest as soon as he begins to call a coat a blouze no one thinks he knows whats what. If you got any old magazenes what was old before the war started send em to the soldiers. They wont know the difference. Some wimen sent our regiment the Baptist Review for three years back. That aint right, Mable. They give you candy that comes by the bale. Then they come round an watch you eat it. I bet if you walked into there place an watched them eat they'd raise an awful holler. They make speeches to you that youd get your money back without askin

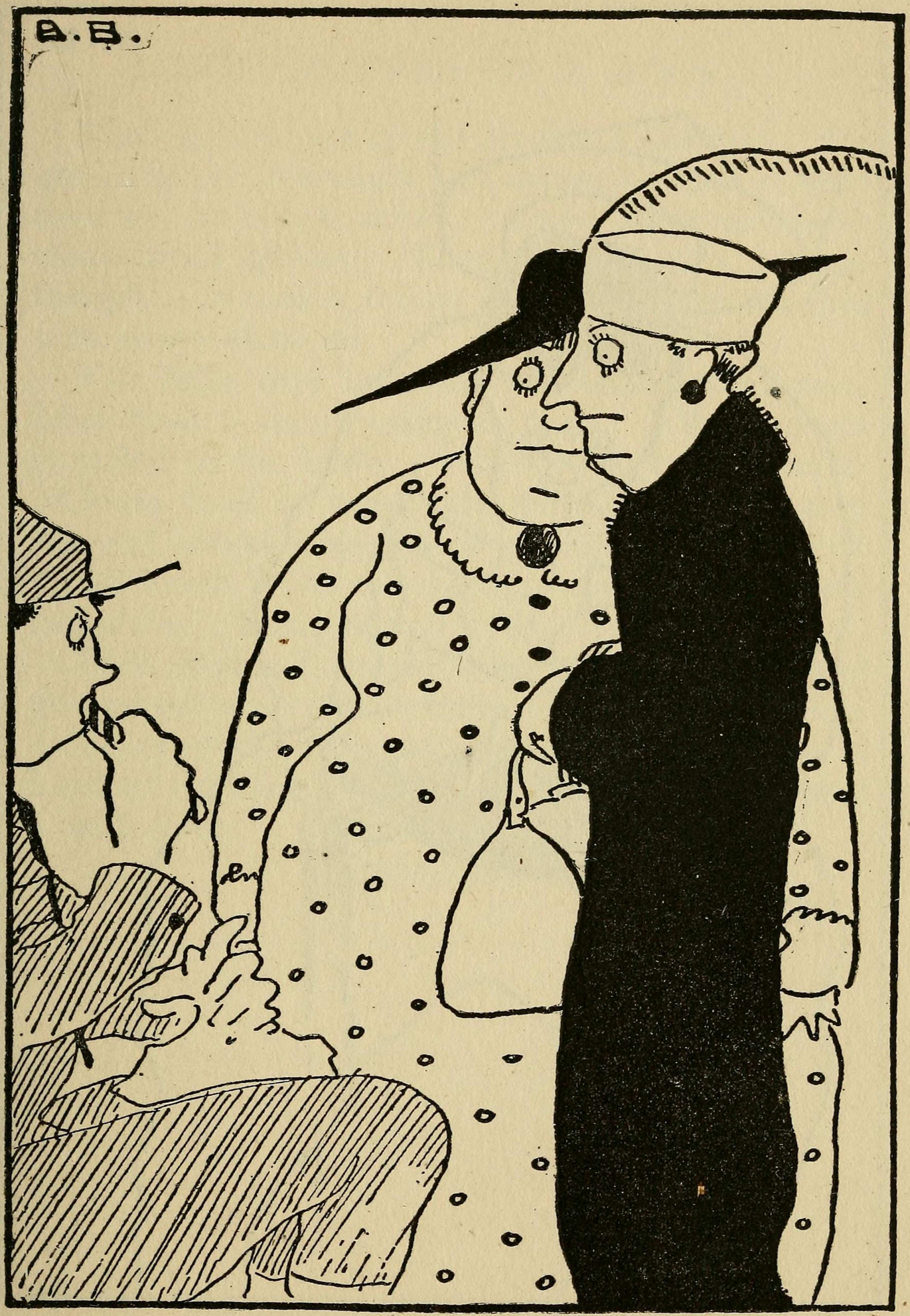
up north. They give you free movies thats so old they look as if they was taken in the rain.

It seems like feedin the hippo at the zoo, Mable. It dont matter so much as long as theres lots of it. Im goin into town tonite with a bunch to eat a swell dinner on a china plate. All but Angus MacKenzie. He eats all his dinners on me. Im awful sick of eatin out of a tin fryin pan. When you put food in it it folds up like a jacknife goin the wrong way. It takes months to make a good mess kit eater.

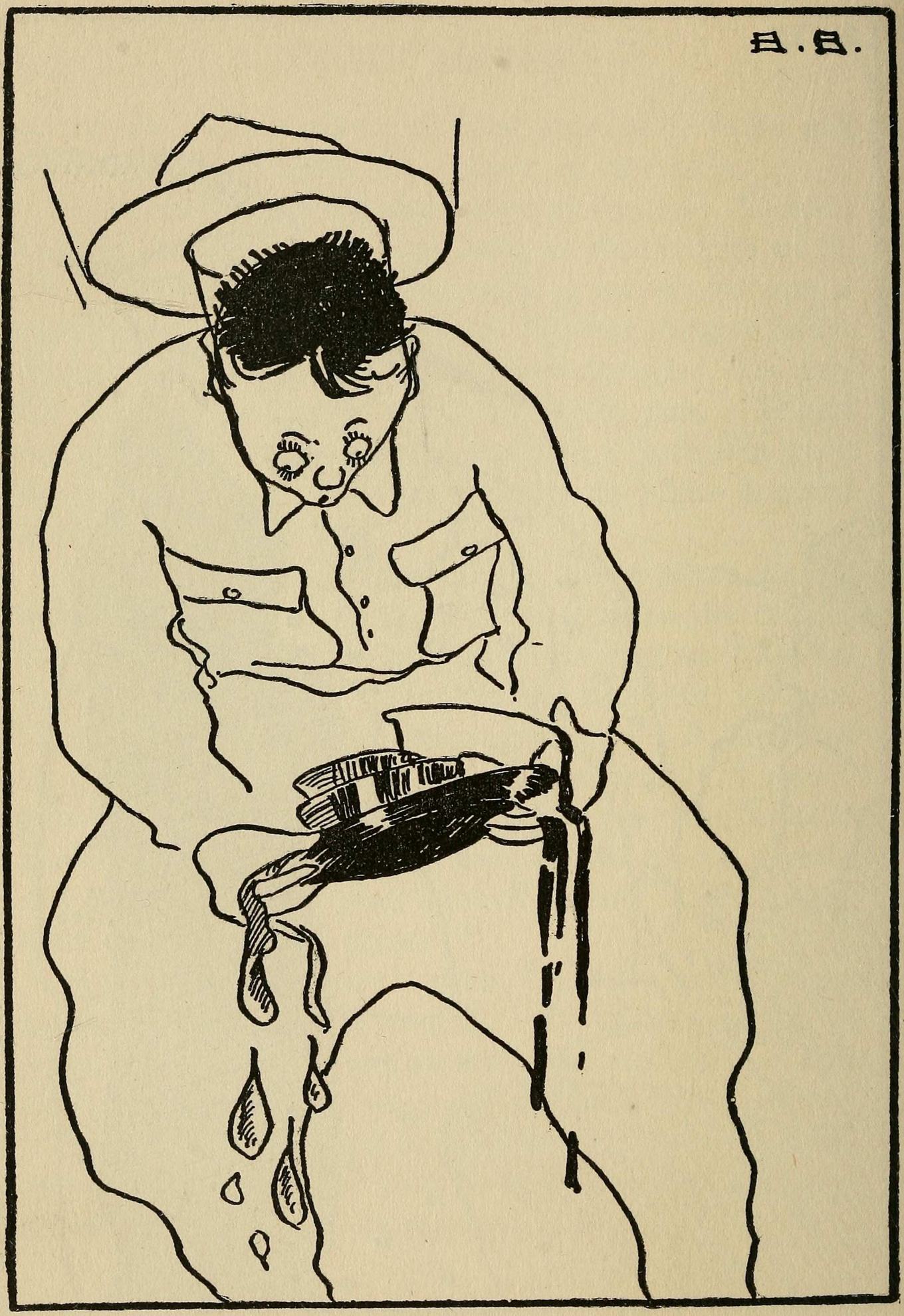
We get our mess from some fellos what stands behind a counter. One of them divides the coffee. He does it by puttin half in your cup an half on your thumb. The other fellos has big spoons. I guess they are old Lacross players. A big wad of food hits your plate splash an knocks it squee gee. The other fello hits the other plate an knocks it the other way. When you get it all its runnin out of one dish up your sleeve an out of the other back into the food pans.

Army food always runs. Cooks love loose grub. There awful stupid. If theres anything solid you get it in the pan with the rim on it. Then they pour the soup on your cover.

When you sit down half what you got left spills out on the table. It isnt so bad now cause everything freezes about as soon as it hits.



"THEY COME ROUND AND WATCH YOU EAT IT"



"ARMY FOOD ALWAYS RUNS"

You ought to see us eat breakfast, Mable. We got so many overcoats and things on that a fello dont get no elbow action. Some fellos eats with there wool gloves. That aint a good scheme though. It makes things taste like eatin peaches with there skins on.

The fello that invented our eatin tables must have been a supply sargent once. All the seats is nailed to the table. When you get a spoonful of loose food up some fello puts his foot in your lap and leaves a couple of pounds of mud there. I just brush it off tho on the next fello. Never complain. Thats me all over.

Well Mable I got to shine my shoes now and go and eat offen china plates with a nigger waiter. I don't eat with a nigger waiter, Mable. Its awful hard to explain things to you sometimes. So now I will close

Hoping you are the same

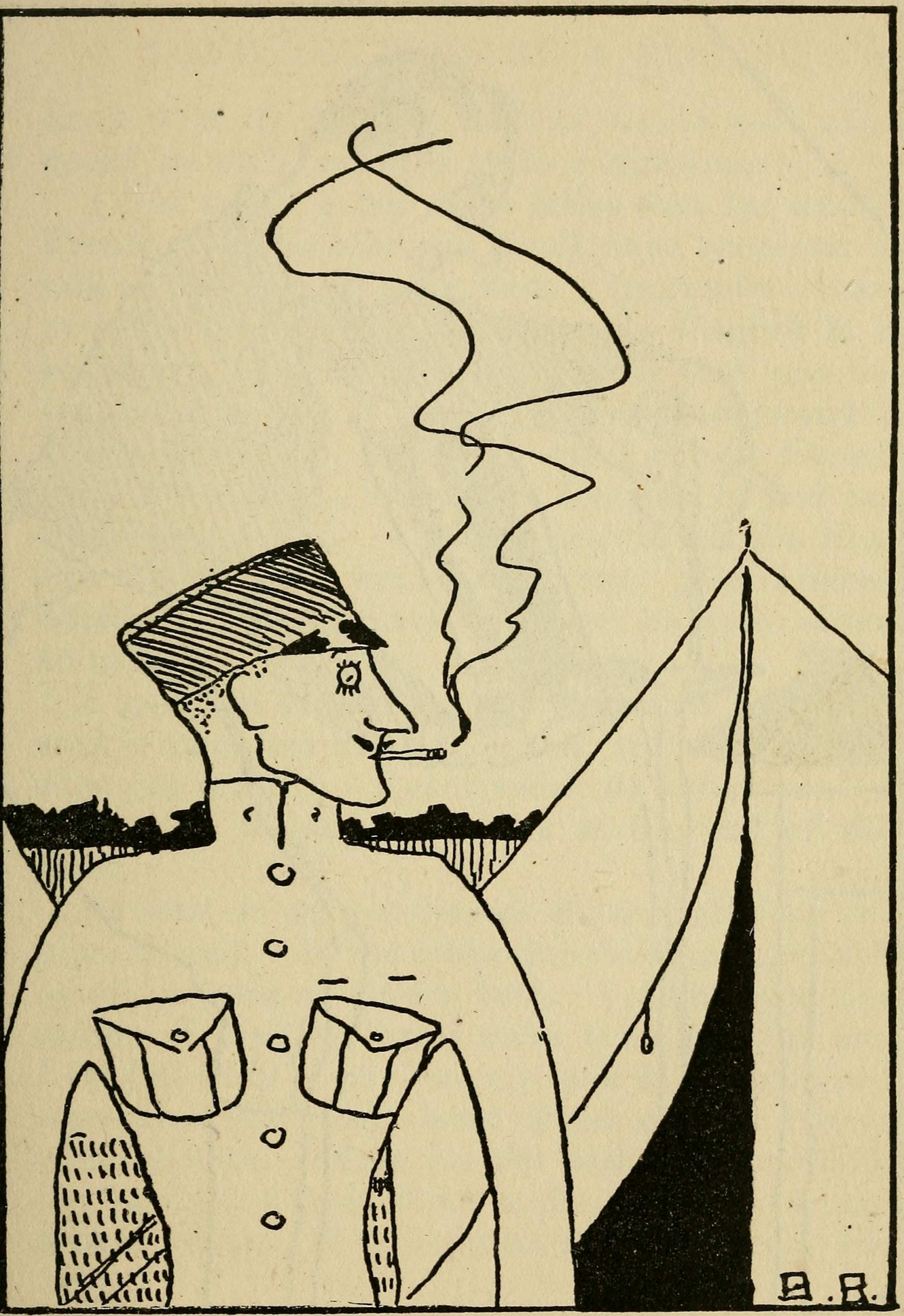
Bill.

Dere Mable:

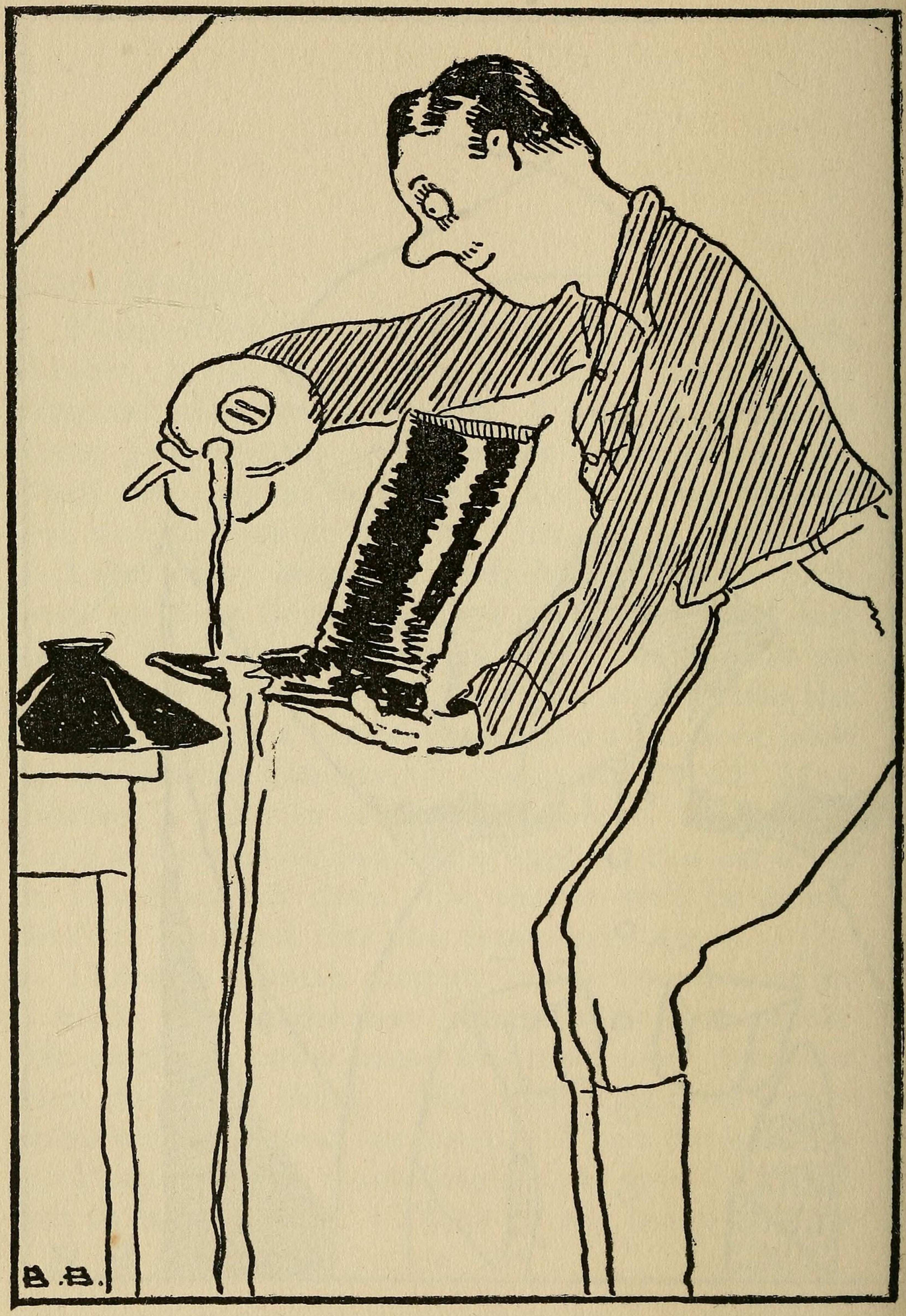
I been thinkin of you a lot durin the last weak, Mable, havin nothin else to do. I been in the hospital with the Bronxitis. I guess I caught it from Joe Loomis. He comes from there. Id have rote you in bed but I dropped my fountin pen on the floor an bent it. Im all right now.

I got some news for you, Mable. The cook says we only drew ten days supply of food last time. He says he guesses when we et that up well go to France. Hes an awful smart fello the cook. Hes got a bet on that if the allys dont buck up an win the Germans is comin out ahead. Max Glucos, a fello in the tent, is refere. Were all eatin as fast as we can. Perhaps we can eat it all in less than ten days. So maybe well be gone, Mable, before I rite you from here again.

Theres a French sargent comes round once in a while an says the war is goin to be over quick. He ought to know cause hes been over there an seen the whole thing. He smokes cigarets something awful an dont say much. Thats because the poor cus cant talk much English. It must be awful not to talk English. Think of not being able to



"HE SMOKES CIGARETS SOMETHING AWFUL"



"I POURED SOME OIL OUT OF HIS LAMP"

say nothin all your life without wavin your arms round an then lookin it up in a dickshunary.

I feel so sorry for these fellos that Im studiin French a lot harder sos theyll have someone to talk to when we get over there. Im readin a book now thats rote all in French. No English in it anywhere, Mable. A fello told me that was the only way to talk it good. I dont understand it very well so far. The only way I kno its French is by the picturs. Some day Im goin to find out what the name is. Then Im goin to get the English of it. Those are some picturs. Aint I fierce, Mable? I guess thats why I get on with wimen so well.

I gave up readin it out loud cause the fellos said it made em think they was in Paris so much they got restless. I cant speak no better yet. I guess that comes all at once at the end of the book.

As soon as we got the hot shouers all fixed the pipes busted. So the other day the Captin walked us all in town to take a bath. I didnt need one much. I used my head more than most of em. Last fall when it was warm I took as many as two a week an got away ahead of the game. I went along though. More for the walk than anything.

I saw the Captin didnt make no move to take a bath hisself. I thought he might be shy. He

dont mix very well with the fellos. I felt sorry for him. Everyone else was laffin an throwin things with him standin off an noone throwin a thing at him. I went up an says "Aint you goin to take a bath this winter to, Captin?" Just jolly, Mable, thats all. I says, "You dont want to mind the bunch. They dont care a bit. There as dirty as you are anyway. Probably more." An I bet they were Mable cause I aint seen the Captin do a stroke of work since we come here. Just stands round givin orders.

I says, "If noone wont lend you a towel you can use mine. I was just goin to have it washed anyway." He got awful red and embarassed Mable. I thought he was goin to choke. Hes awful queer.

Just like the other mornin he calls me over an says, "Smith, my orderlies sick. You can shine my boots this mornin." He said it like Id been beggin him to for a month. An then he says, "Smith you can lite the fire in my stove." He had me thinkin he was doin me favors. He said I might put some oil on his boots if I wished. I says that would be a great treat an I wished he wouldnt be so kind or the fellos would think he was playin favorites. I guess he didnt here me Mable cause hed just gone out. I said it anyway. I didnt care if he wasnt there. Spunky. Thats me all over.

I couldnt find no oil for his boots anywhere, Mable, so I poured some out of his lamp. An then I dont think that suited him. Queer fello the Captin.

I keep herein more about this fello Broggins. I suppose he belongs to the Home Guards an wares his uniform round in the evenin. An I suppose he has an American flag on his ritin paper. It dont mean nothin in my life. I aint goin to put up no arguments or get nasty like most fellos would. Dignity. Thats me all over, Mable. Let me tell you though if I ever come home and find him shinin his elbos on the top of your baby grand Ill kick him down the front steps if I only have one leg to do it with.

Im ritin this in the Y.M.C.A. in the afternoon cause Im goin on guard tonite. I dont see why they dont make it a permenant detail and be done with it. Someone said the top sargents a man of one idea. I guess Im the idea. I didnt go out to drill this afternoon. I didnt say nothin to the sargent though cause sargents have an idea that if they dont get a lot of fellos to go out to drill with them they dont look popular. I got to go now sos to get in my tent before they come from drill.

As ever

on guard,

Bill.

Dere Mable:

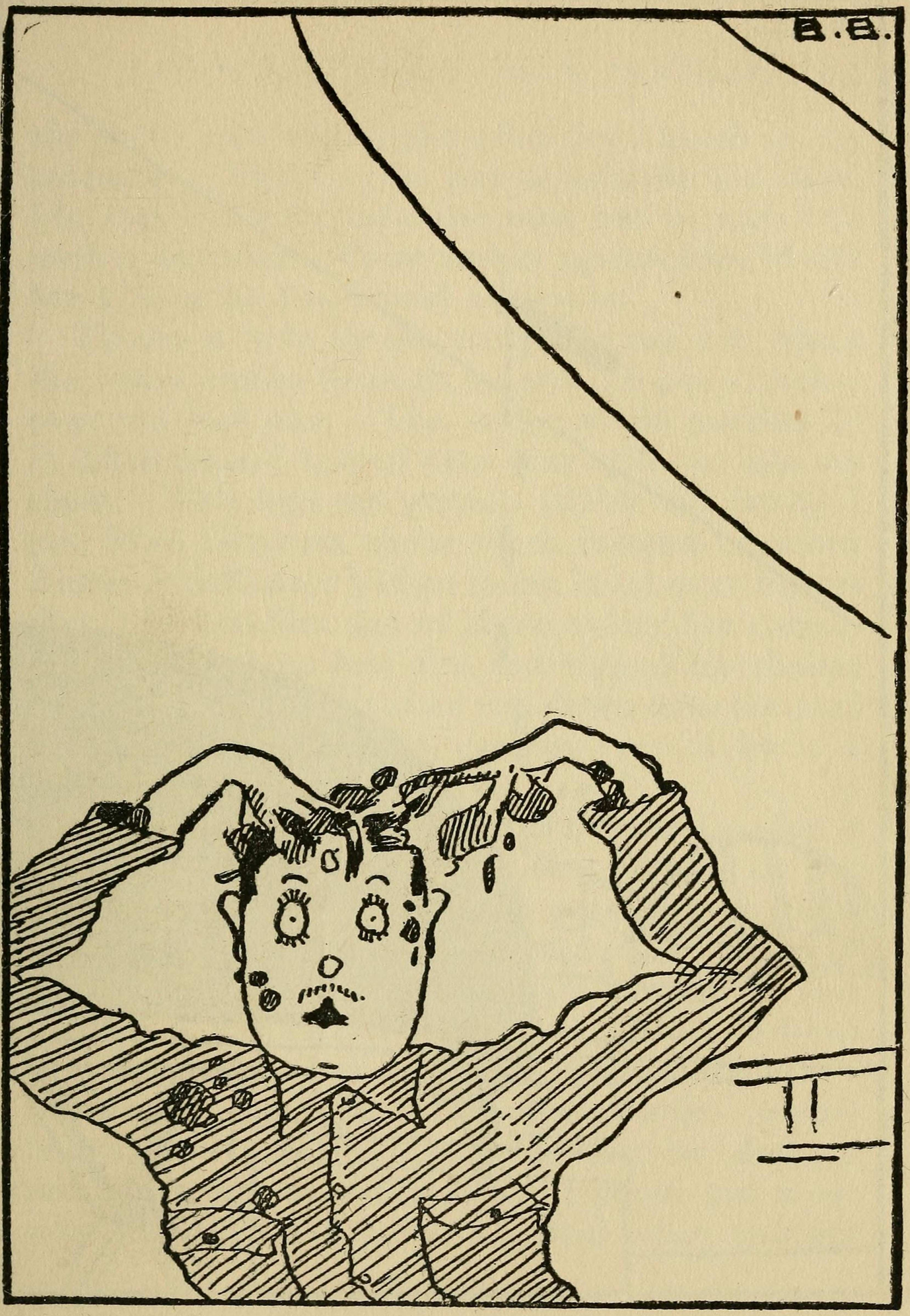
I would have rote sooner but I had such a cold I couldnt say nothin for most a weak.

Well Mable, we et all the food like the cook said but we aint in France yet. I guess he aint got as many brains as he said he had. Everyone is sore at him cause we didnt kick at none of his food for more than a weak thinkin that when wed et it all wed go away. He thinks its funny an says "Do youse guys think this war is a Cooks tour? I hate fellos what tries to get out of things by bein smart.

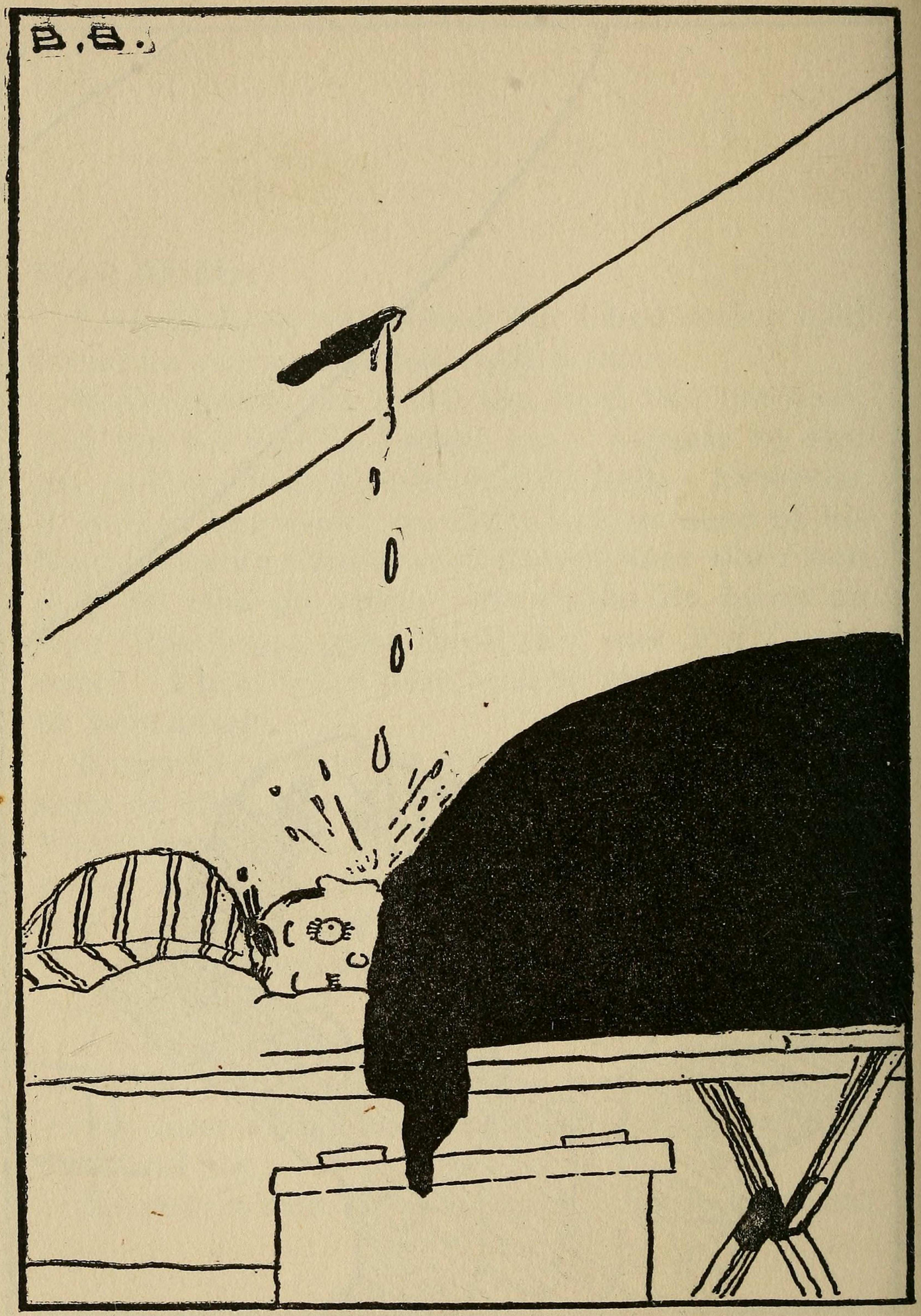
Everythings covered with mud includin me. I seem to attract mud like I was a maggot, Mable. Yesterday I spent all the afternoon shinin up for guard sos to be the Colonels orderly. Then I step out of the tent and flui. The sargent says, "Smith dont you know enuff not to go on guard lookin like that?"

I even got mud in my hair. Max Glucos says when he combs his its like rakin out a garden. From what I seen of him though I dont see how he found out.

Its pourin rain an awful cold. Its so cold that



"I EVEN GOT MUD IN MY HAIR"



"THE WATER COMES THROUGH ON ME"

the tooth past rolls right offen your brush in the morning. The Captin has a cold in his nose. He says he wont take the men out in such bad wether as today. Taint nothin against him Mable but I hope he has a cold all winter.

Theres a hole in the tent over my cot where the water comes through on me. I put a slicker over me last nite. The water made puddles in it. Then when I turned over they spilt out into my shoes. This had me guessin Mable till finally I put Max Glucoses shoes there instead of mine. Angus MacKenzie had so many holes over his cot that it looked like one of those safety fire sprinklers. He got up last nite and rigged his shelter half sos the water hit it an run down onto the next cot. Hes a brite fello, Angus, even if he is a forener.

The other day he had some medecine for a cold. It says on the bottle that it was 17 per cent alcohol. He drank the whole thing right down sos nobody couldnt get hold of it. It made him awful sick but he says thats because he isnt used to it for such a long time. Me and hims goin down next week to put in a stock of tonics.

Its awful hard to rite letters, Mable. Somebodys always fallin over your feet or draggin something wet over the paper if youve got a cot near the door like mine is. And when you get

goin finally at about the fourth try some sargent always comes in with a list and makes you check up something.

Sometimes I go over to the Y.M.C.A., Mable. But as soon as you get ritin a bald headed fello jumps up an says "Now fellos well all sing." All the fellos whats ritin looks up an says "Aw one thing and another." I dont know who the bald headed fello is. They got one in every Y.M.C.A. They all look about alike. I guess there a regular issue. Theys always a bunch of fellos what dont seem to kno why they came. They all start singin. Then I cant rite no more or do nothin. So I come home an go to bed. Independent. Thats me all over, Mable.

Most of the taxis is swalowed up in the mud. Theys only two or three runnin now. Only the big strong fellos can get to town. The cook says its the old theory of the arrival of the fittest. But I guess you dont know nothin about cience, Mable. When I go to town I wrap my blouze in a newspaper. If they know your goin they give you a list of things to get that looks like a Chinese Message to Congress. By the time you go to come home you got so many bundles you look like one of those fellos in the Funny Papers. Everyone stands in the square looking like a hat rack waitin for the three taxis to come along. When

they see one they rush it like they do in the movies when the milunares cars runs over the poor fellos kid. If goin over the top is any worse than gettin under the top of one of them things with fifty bundles an as many fellos then Sherman didnt know many swear words, eh Mable? But thats history. I guess you wouldnt understand.

And then when you get home without a bath or a hair cut or the movies or nothin, an you forgot to get that shavin soap for yourself an spent all your money they say "Thanks Bill. Put it over there. Can you change a ten dollar bill?" There ought to be a law against makin money in such big numbers.

Im glad youve taken up singin lessons again. You ought to take a lot of em. I got a favor to ask. I dont do that offen. Proud. Thats me all over. But if that fello Broggins keeps buttin round sing for him Mable. It aint askin much with me down here defendin you. Although I dont see why I had to come down here to do it.

Yours internally,

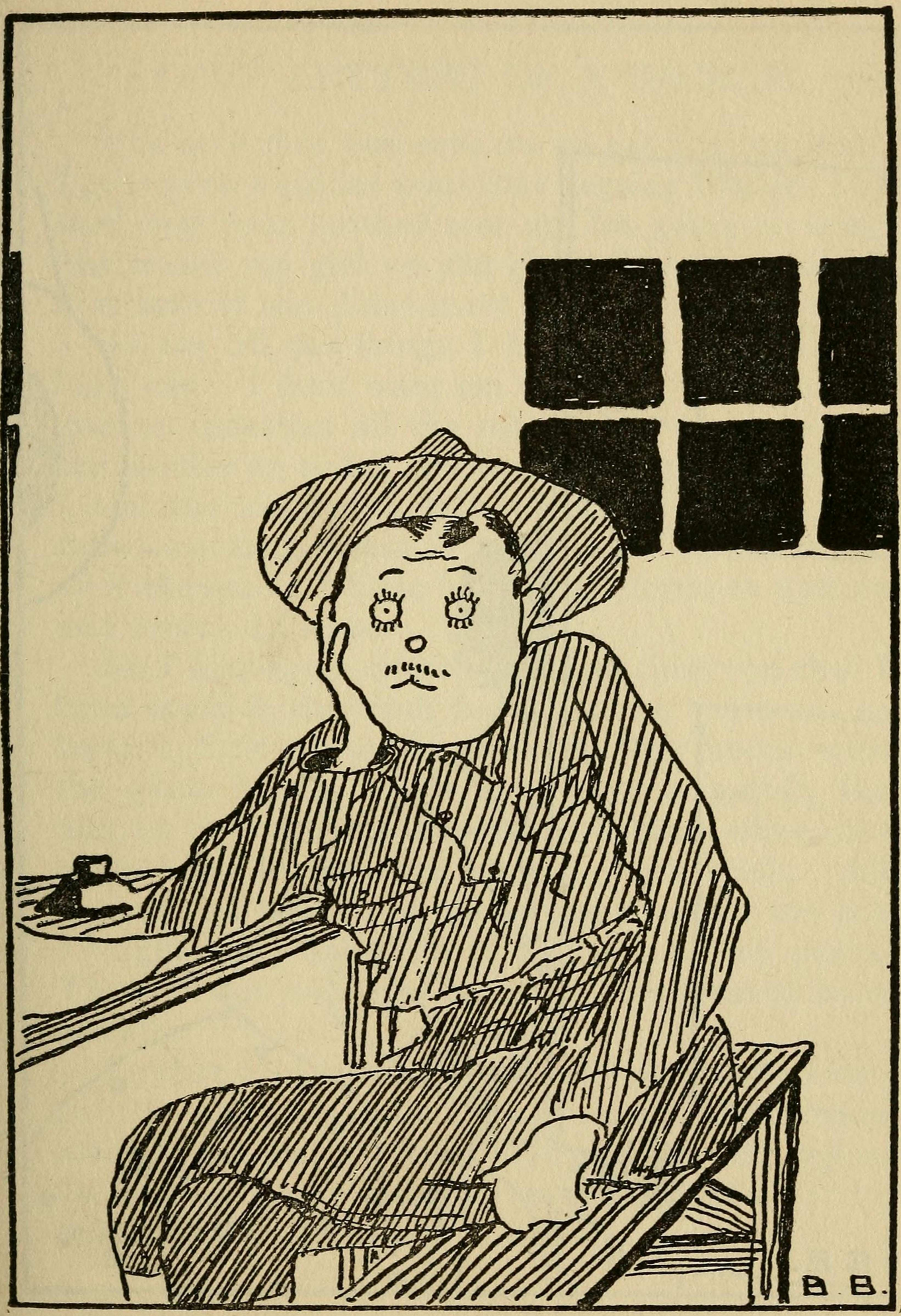
Bill.

Dere Mable:

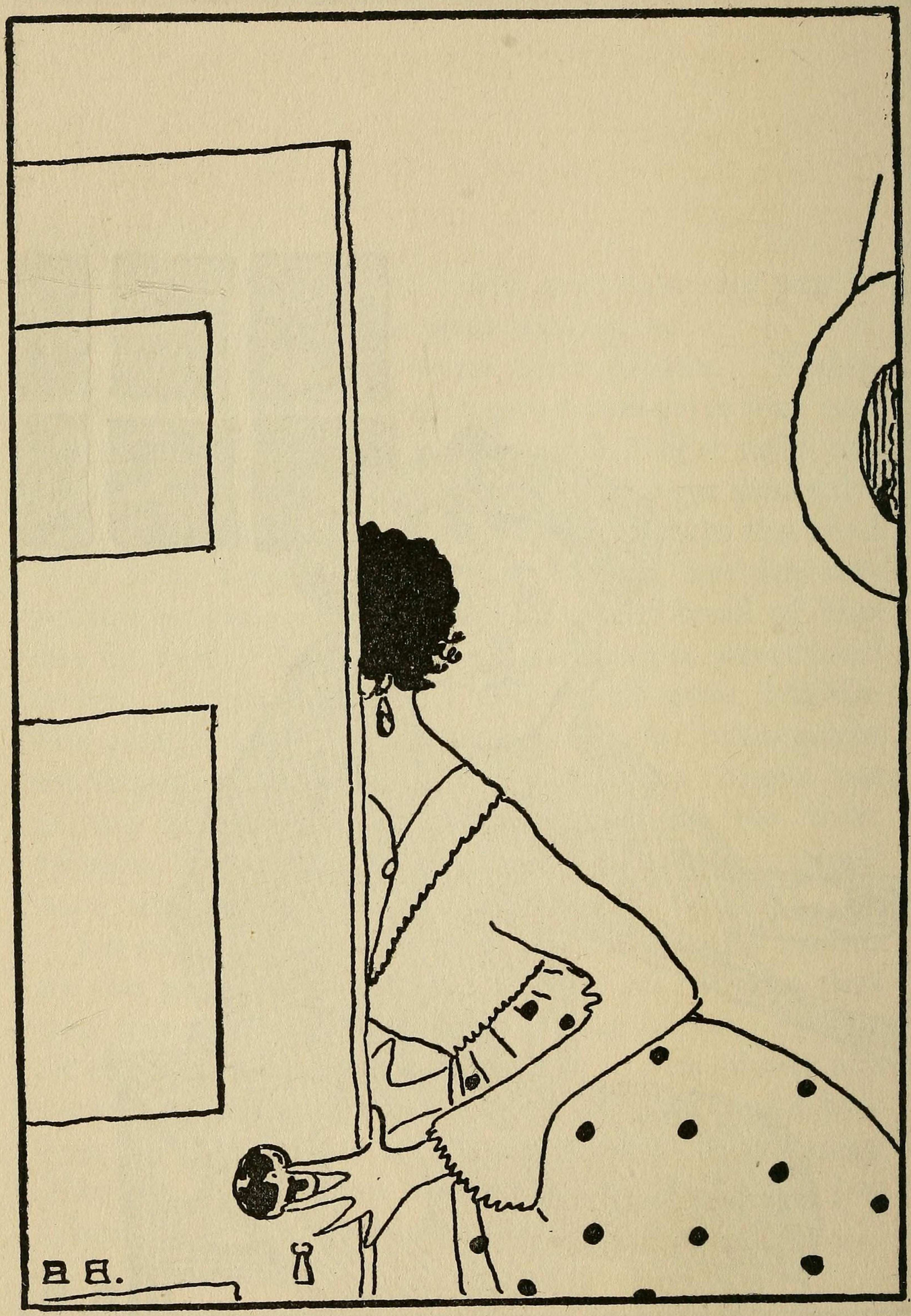
This is the last time I will ever take my pen in hand for you. All is over among us.

I felt it comin for some time Mable. Today among some letters that I got from girls was one from a girl what knos you well. She told me all about this fello Broggins. She says you take him around with you everywhere. Thats the kind of a fello I thought he was, Mable, but Im surprized at you. She says your awful fond of him hes so cute. I aint cute an aint never pretended to be. A mans man. Thats me all over, Mable. She says she went up to your house the other night an he was sittin in your lap stickin his tongue out at my pictur on the mantlepiece. After that, Mable, theres nothin to say. So I repeat, its all over among us.

Im returnin today by parcels post the red sweter an the gloves that has no fingers an the sox that you wear over your head an your pictur. Most of the stuff aint been used much. The pictur has some mud on it cause I had to keep it in the bottom of my barrak bag an my shoes came next. The sox I cant send back cause I sold em to Joe Glucos an you wouldnt want em now.



"THE LAST TIME I WILL TAKE MY PEN IN HAND FOR YOU"



"IT WONT BE NO USE RUNIN TO THE DOOR"

The stuff that you sent me to eat I havnt kept. I guess you wouldnt want that anyway Mable. The stuff that your mother sent me Im going to keep. She wasnt my girl an she didnt have to send all that stuff if she didnt want to.

As for all the things I have give you, Mable, keep em. I dont want em no more. I aint even goin to menshun all the money Ive spent on you for movies an sodas an the Lord knows what not. I aint the kind of a fello to throw that up to a fello or even menshun it in no ways. I kept track of it though in a little book. It comes to $28.27 and some odd sense.

An I aint agoin to hold it up against you that I been savin in the bank for most two years sos to have a little somethin towards that house with the green blinds. And that I got somethin like $87.22 in the bank if you can believe what that eagle beak in the cage rites in your book. All wasted you might say, when you think of the fun I might have had with it in the last two years. Those things we'll just forget. You seem to have already.

An that seasons pass I got for you for the Happyhour sos you could keep in touch with things while I was away. Keep that and take Broggins. Otherwise I got a hunch you aint goin to the movies as much as you used to.

I guess this will hit your father an mother pretty hard. They got nobody to blame but yourself. On the other hand its goin to please some girls that I know. So its a poor wind that dont blow nobody round as the poets say. I guess you wont here much about the poets any more, Mable. About all youll here is Broggins. I hate a man what talks about himself.

I suppose he has joined the Home defence. Are you goin to have a military weddin, Mable?

Im kind of sorry for your father. If you have his liver on your hands dont blame me. You know the doctor said any kind of a shock would set him off a mile.

An now, Mable, Im closin for the last time. It wont be no use runin to the door when you here the postman no more cause he wont have nothin but the gas bill. From now on the only way youll here from me is in the papers perhaps when we get over there.

Now Im going to ask you a favor, Mable, for old times sake. Take the pictur I had taken pointin to the American flag an burn it up. You cant have that to show your friends no more an I aint goin to have no flat foot makin faces at it. I may be selfish, Mable, but a girl cant make a cake an eat it too as the old sayin is.

Give my best to your father an mother. Tell

em I simpathize with them in there loss. Its no use ritin any more cause Im firm as the rock of Gibber Alter. Concrete. Thats me all over, Mable.

as ever

yours no longer

Bill.

Form 1201

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	NMe
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a telegram. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT — GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	NMe
Night Letter	N-L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a telegram. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

RECEIVED AT Philopolis, N. Y.

Miss Mable Gimp
106 Main Street
Philopolis, N. Y.

Dere Mable: How was I to know Broggins was a dog. You can send back all your stuff and make me some more if you want to. This telegram is costing me nine cents a word so I cant say no more now. Thrifty. Thats me all over, Mable.

Bill.

"THAT'S ME ALL OVER, MABLE"

"Thats Me All Over, Mable"

Dere Mable:

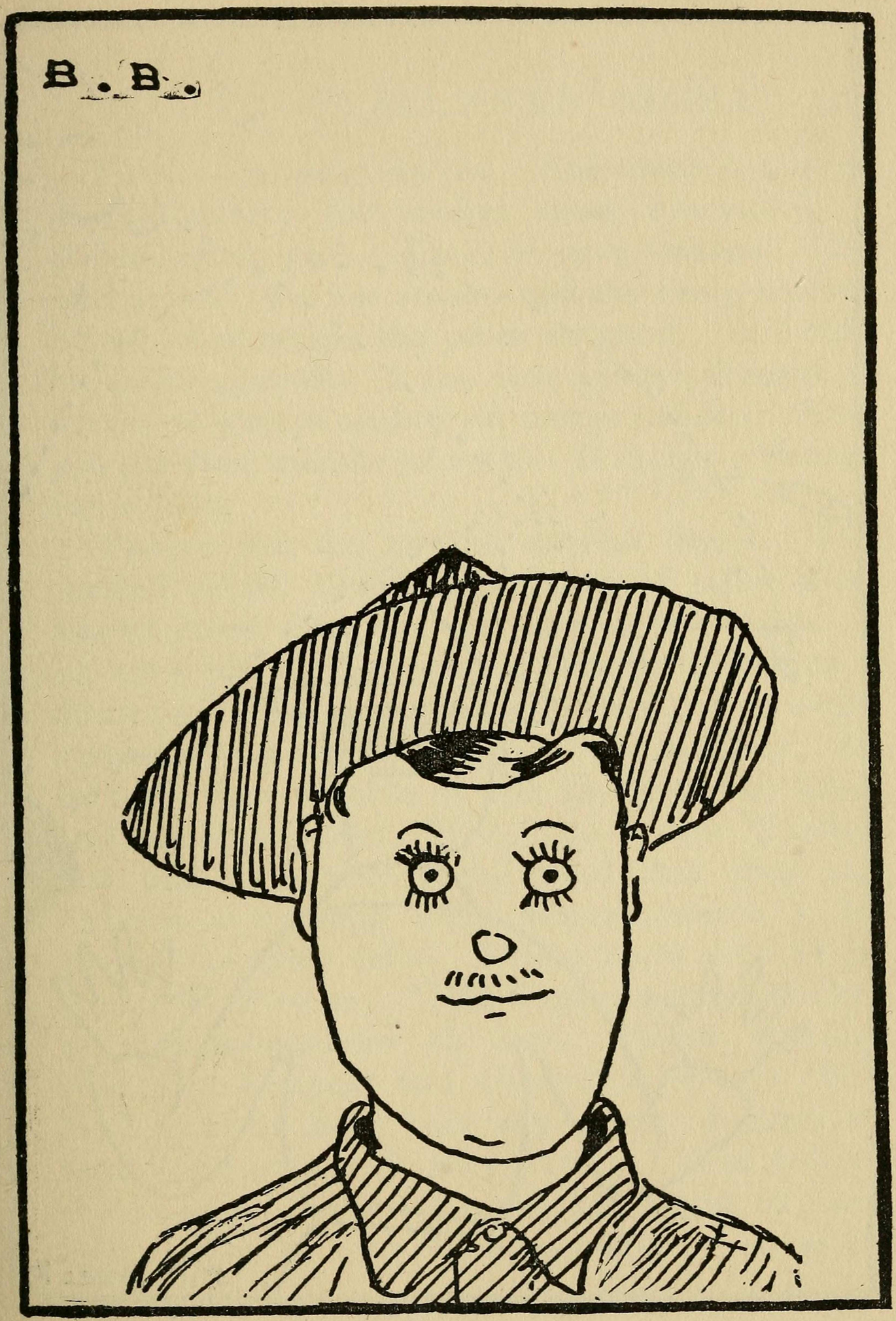
I take my pen in hand to tell you what do you think I done now? I left the infantry an gone back into the artillery. The Captin hated to let me go. He said the Artillery Colonel was a friend of his. I guess thats why he finally said all right. It wasnt that I was scared of the infantry. I guess you know that I aint scared of anything that walks on two legs except the measles. The artillerys really more dangerous than the infantry cause you stand in one place so they can get a good line on you while in the infantry your running round all the time.

Seein the Captin was so jealous of me I thought a fello with brains would have more chance over here. I tried to transfer as an officer but the Captin said I better go over as a private and as soon as they saw what kind of a fello I was theyd fix me all right. He seemed to wake up a little

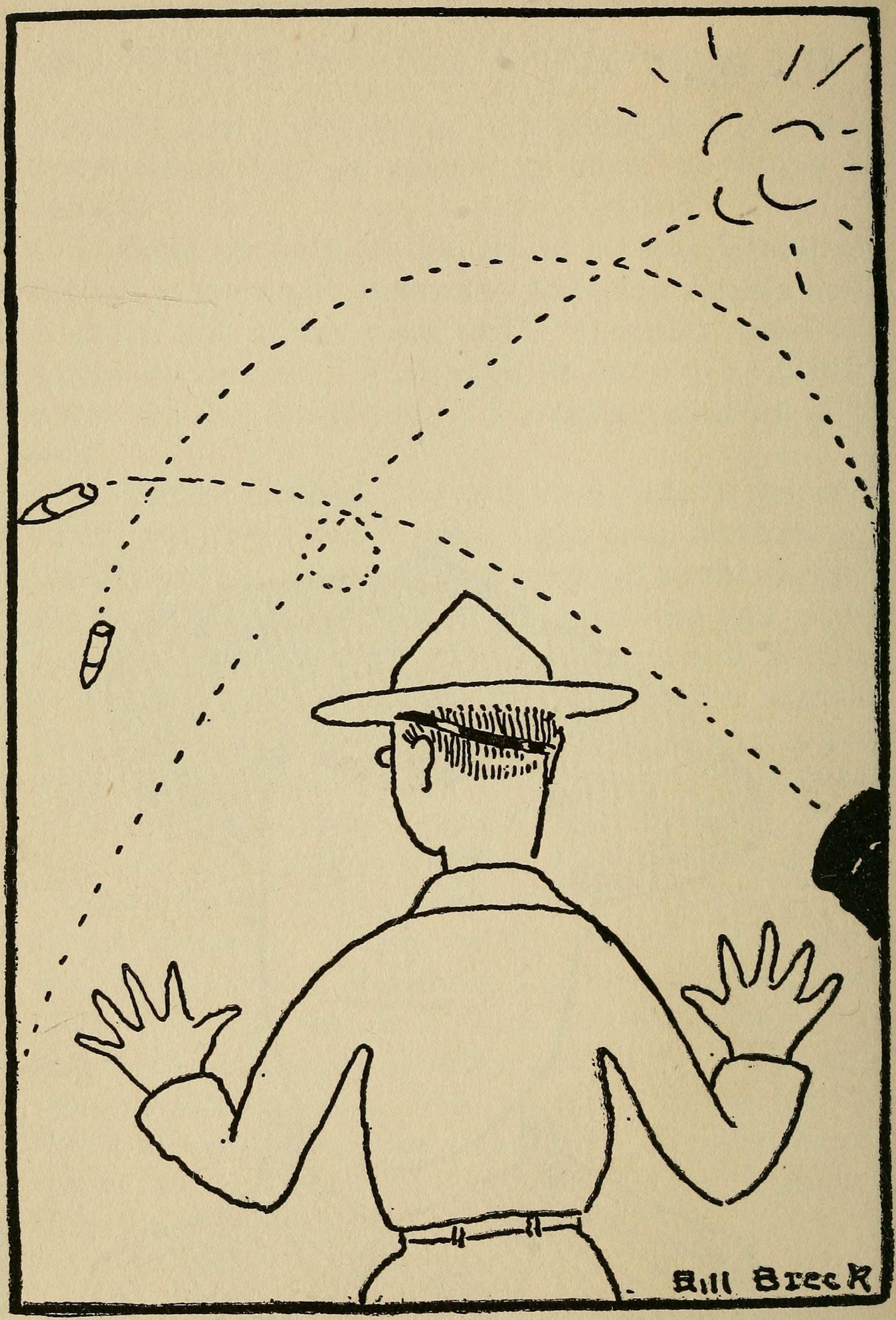
when he saw I was goin. Im going to put in my applicashun for an officer as soon as I get a chance.

I didnt go back to the same battery I was in before cause youll remember that the Captin and I didnt get along very well. Couldnt seem to agree on nothin. I thought it would be pleasanter for me an him to if I went to another battery.

It almost seemed like they was waitin for me cause the day after I came over they hitched up the horses and drove the cannons out to the range. Its kind of hard to explain to a girl like you what a range is. The only way I can explain it is that it aint nothin like a range. There aint nothin here but mountins and we can fire all we want without hittin nothin but the mountins and once in a while maybe one of the mountin ears. But they say there so tough they dont mind it a bit. Thats a funny thing about artillery, Mable. The object seems to be not to hit nothin. The day we got out here I heard the Captin say "Well Im glad were way out in a place like this where we don't run no danger of hittin nothin." All I said was "I like to see a fello careful Captin, but if thats all your worryin about you needent have taken so much trouble." The longer I know Captins the less I understand them.



BILL.



"WE CAN FIRE ALL WE WANT WITHOUT HITTIN NOTHIN"

This is the rainy season. The south is a wonderful country for wether cause everything is divided off so well. There is three seasons. The cold season, the hot season and the rainy season. Thats what makes the place so good. It would be awful tiresome if you was always freezin to death, or always soaked or always bakein. Now you get four months of each. It makes a change for a fello.

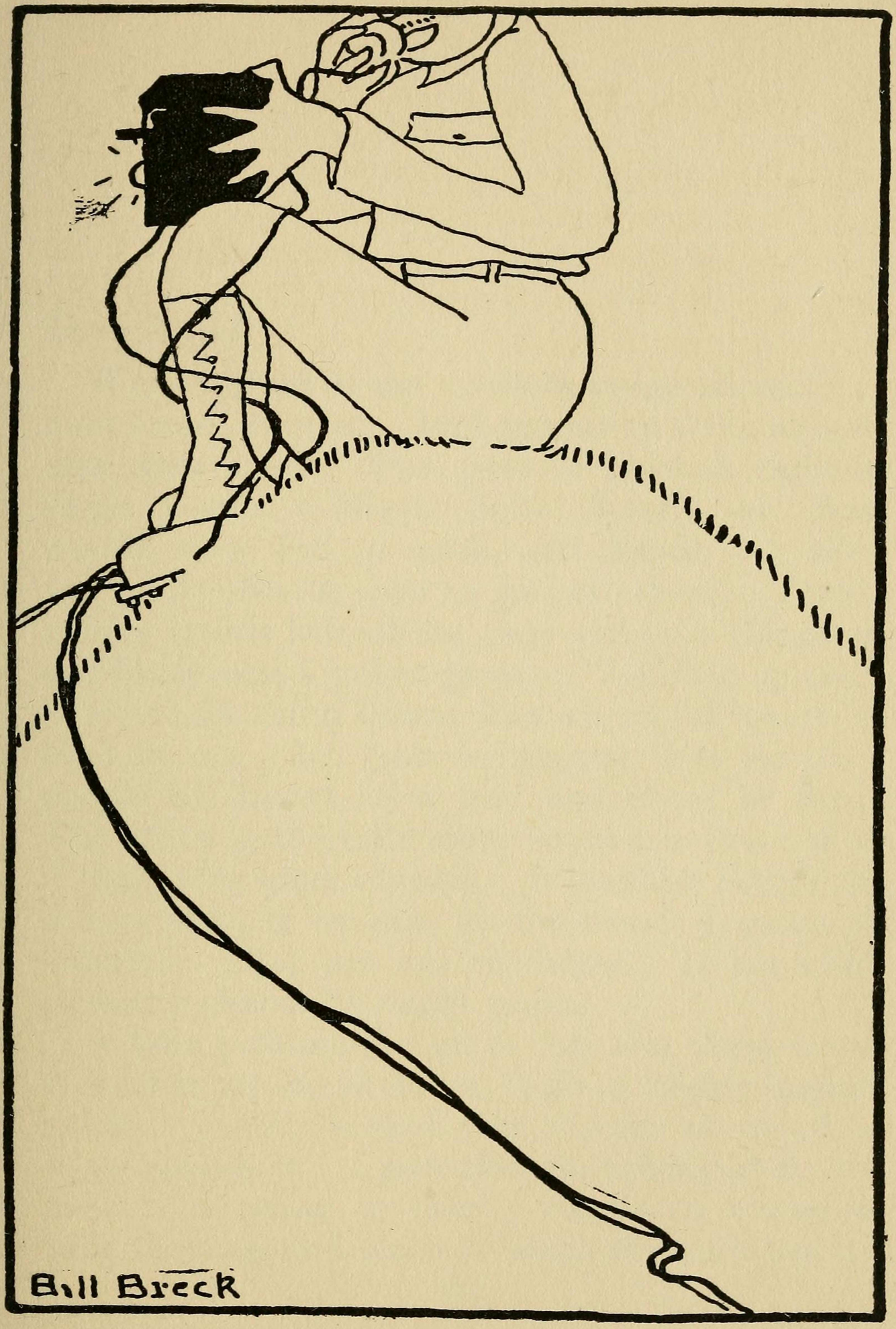
Theyve put me on the speshul detail. The speshul detail, Mable, is a bunch of fellos what knows more than any one else in the camp. I sit on a hill all day with a little telephone in a lunch box and take messages. They got an awful system of sending messages in the artillery. Ill be sittin there thinkin of you an waitin for lunch and somebody says "Hello" an I says "Hello" just like a regular fone. And then they say "Heres a message from mmmmmmmm." Its always the same fello. I dont know who he is. And then they say "Tell Captin mmmmmmmm to mmmmmmmmm at once. Please repeat." And then I repeat and whoever it is says "No, No" and you dont here any more. I guess its some kind of a code they have. I dont believe the Captin is on to it cause you ought to have heard what he said the other day. I guess he

was talkin about the fello on the other end. I never heard your father do better.

Its awful dangerous work cause where I sit aint more than half a mile from the shells. If they ever put a curve on one of them its good night Willie. I aint scared of course. I just menshuned it sos you wouldnt worry. Ill tell you more about the telefone the next time. I may know more about it myself then.

Yours till they curve one

Bill.



"I SIT ON A HILL ALL DAY"

Dere Mable:

Were still up at the artillery range shootin. I dont know what at. Im beginnin to think nobody else does ether. Our guns is pointed right at some woods. Weve been shootin at those woods now for a week and havnt hit them yet. We always seem to go over them. Theres a fello stands behind the guns and yells things all day like it was a poker game. "Up five, up ten." The whole thing seems like an awful waste of time to me. Im goin to suggest that we tie a couple of horses to a tree and shoot at them. The fellos would take more interest in there work if there was some reward. It wouldnt bother the horses much if we cant hit the woods I guess, eh Mable? They can use my horse. If Im willin to take a chance he ought to be.

A fello told me the other day that these torpetoes what we shoot cost as high as twenty dollars apiece. I dont believe that though or theyd be a law against it. I guess he was talking about the guns. Im going to take a couple of torpetoes back to camp and see how much the audience de-

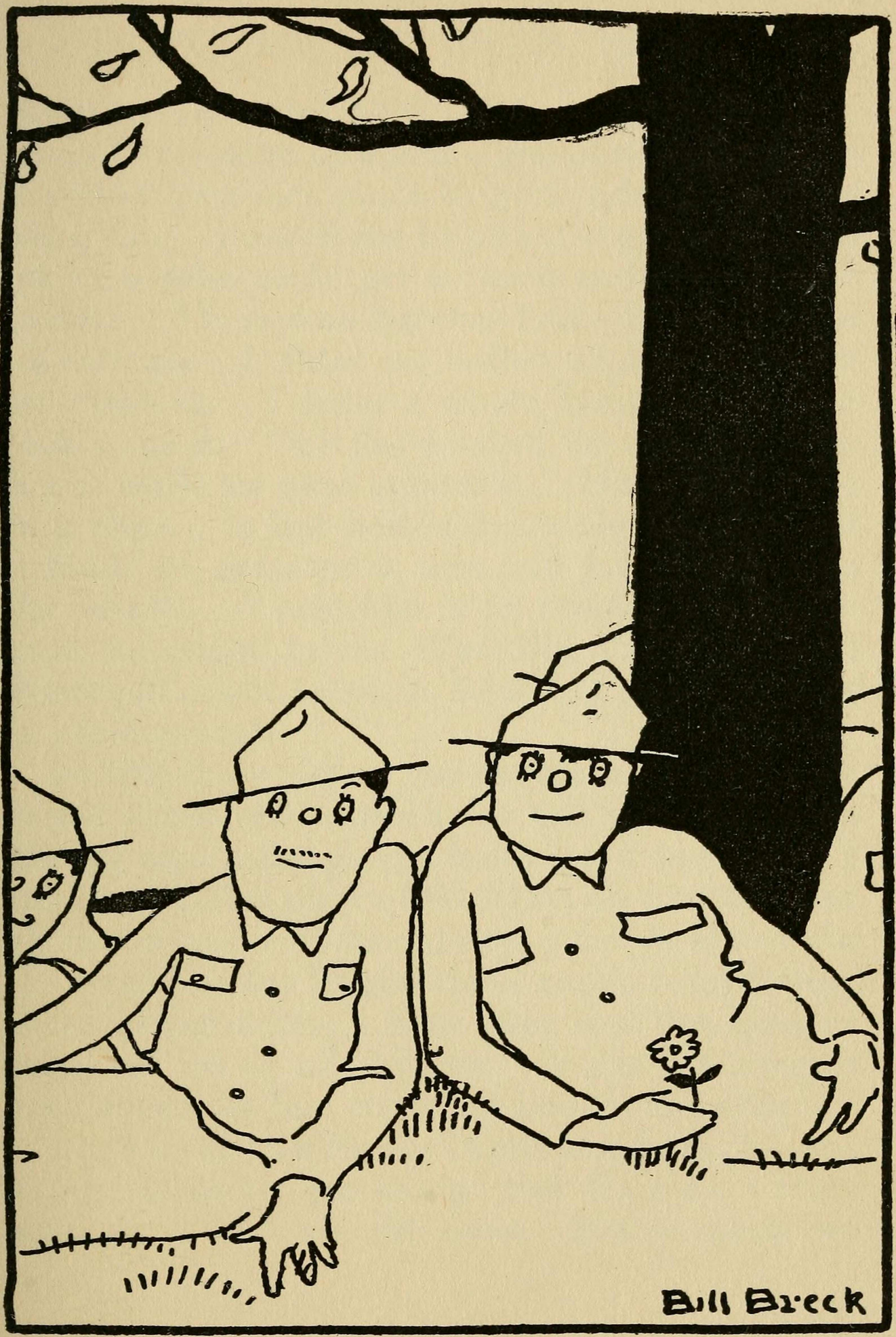
partment will give me for them. Thrifty. Thats me all over, Mable.

The mountin ears come over and watch us. I guess the moonshining business must be lax this time of year. A moonshiner makes whisky out of corn. Angus MacKenzie tried to make some by soaking a couple of ears in a bucket for almost a week. It didn't taste like much though an made us kind of sick. I guess you have to have a still like these fellos have. They call it a still, Mable, cause they have to use it on the quiet.

The mountin ears are awful fierce with big adams apples and round hair cuts when they have any. They have family foods. I guess they got the idea from the movies, Mable. For instance the Turners live on the one side of the mountin and the Howards on the other. That makes them sore so they shoot each other. Accordin to the stories they only shoot each other when they are goin to church. From the looks of them I guess they made that rule to save amunishun.

Angus an I went out last Sunday looking for a still. We thought we had one once and watched it most all day but it turned out to be just a little shack where they sell fig newtons and lemon pop to the fellos. You cant fool Angus.

The more I see of the army, Mable, the more I



"A BUNCH LYIN UNDER THE TREES"

think its an awful bluff. I heard a lot of talk when I first came up about a gun park. I thought it would be a nice place to go Sundays and have some fun. I asked the Captin if there was a lake where a fello could get a canoo and have a little paddle. He said no but they had a fine collecshun of animals. I didnt see nothin of no park when we came up. I spent a whole Sunday afternoon lookin for it. One day I asked the sargent where it was while we were unhitchin. He said we were in it then. It isnt nothin but a big field without a blade of grass or a tree and just the guns in the middle. I told him if he thought this was a park he ought to see Weewillo Park home. I guess you ought to know, Mable, I paid your way in often enough.

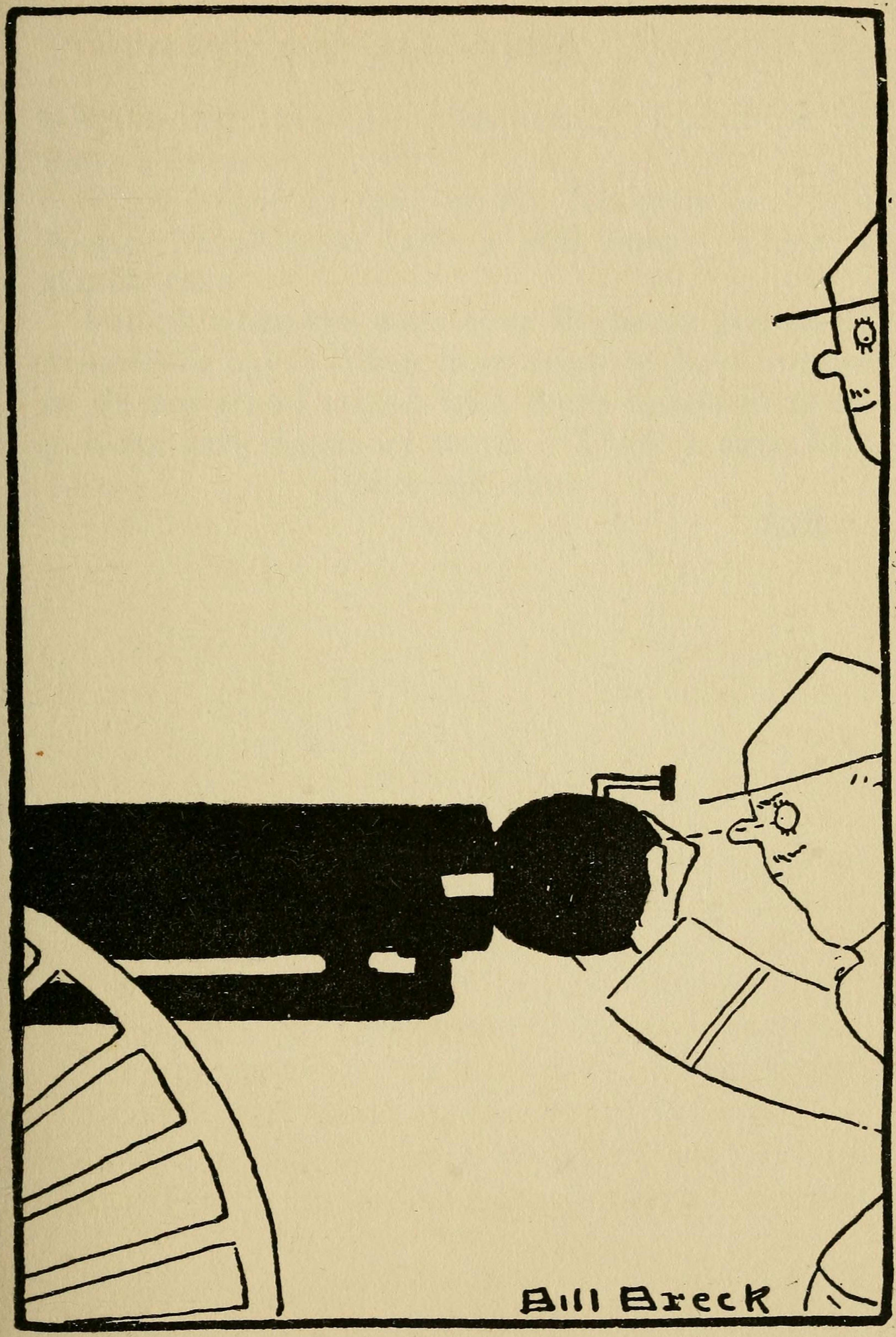
Its like those picturs you see stuck around Main Street about men wanted for the army. Theres always one fello playin tunes on a bugle, an a couple of fellos playin Old Maid on a table. An off in the corner theres always a bunch lyin under the trees like the High School tennis team having there pictur taken. Now that isnt the kind of thing we do at all, Mable. If the top sargent ever found us like that hed swallo his whissle.

I had a run in with the Captin last week, Mable. I cant seem to get along with Captins. High strung. Thats me all over. Every week we

have an inspecshun and I have to clean the whole gun myself. They send the whole bunch down but I guess its just to hand me things. Like nurses in an operation. It aint much fun I tell you. When the Major came around next day he opened the little door in the back of the gun and I guess he saw how many parts there was to keep clean cause he says "My, what an awful bore." The Major is all right, Mable. He likes a fello to have a little fun once in a while. I guess he aint never been a Captin. I says "Yes, Major, it certainly is, an nobody knows it better than me cause I cleaned the whole thing myself." He says "Well if you dont do somethin about it next week then you wont have nobody to blame but yourself."

I took the hint right off and when it came time to clean guns for the next inspecshun I got a horse and rode over to town and took a bath. I told the Captin afterwards what the Major had told me but I dont think he would care if General Perishing had asked me home to dinner. Its what *he* wants. To tell the truth I think he was sore cause I got a bath an he didnt.

Thats a funny thing about the army. If theres a speck of dirt on the old guns or the horses everyone gets an awful ballin out. But if a fello



"MY, WHAT AN AWFUL BORE"

takes a little time to wash hisself youd think he done a crime.

Well I got to quit now. Im goin on what Angus MacKenzie calls a still hunt. Thats a skotch joke.

I think when the wars over Ill marry you an be a mountin ear. They dont seem to have nothin to do but stand round with there hands in there pockets and watch us work. Thats a nice life.

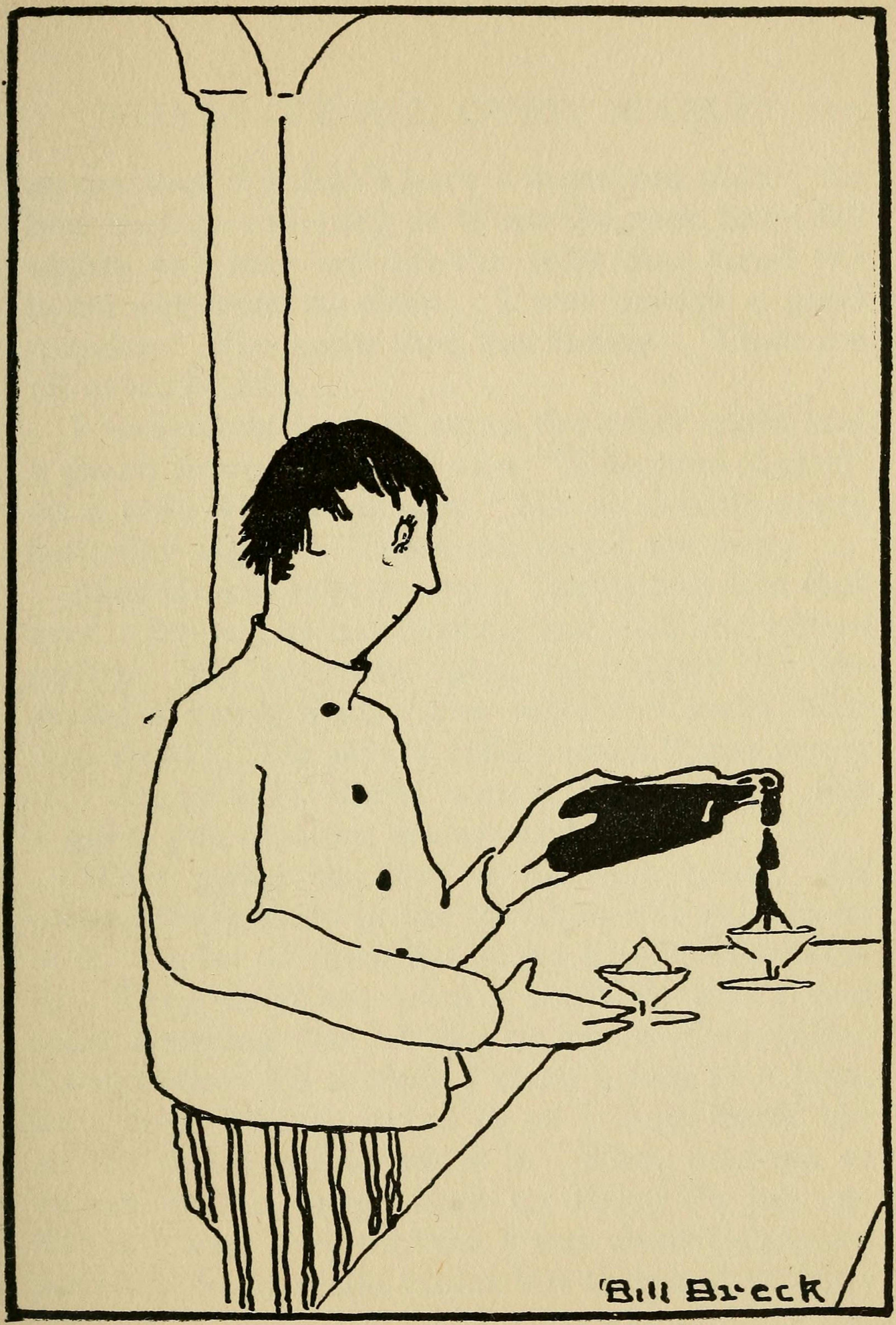
yours till then

Bill.

Dere Mable:

Spring is come. The buds is stickin out on the trees. Pieces of tacksicabs is stickin up through the mud on the roads. Yesterday I caught a fly. It makes a fello feel romantic somehow or other. Some of em shines there shoes and rites home oftener. Some has even had there picturs taken. Max Glucos was so sure spring was here that he got usin the Sibly stove for a laundry bag. Then we had a cold night and Angus MacKenzie thought it was kindling. Max an Angus aint speakin now. Not that that matters much though cause they never said much when they did talk.

It kind of makes me restless Mable when I think of you and Main St. and the fello with the long hair in Billings and Stover what used to make us up Sundays. An I get lonesome for Maple st. with you an me sittin at one end of the piazza pretendin we was listenin to your father readin the newspaper out loud. If I ever get old, Mable, dont let me read the newspaper out loud. An do you remember how still wed have to sit sos the hammok wouldnt squak after eleven o'clock or your fatherd stick his head out the door



"THE FELLO WITH THE LONG HAIR"

an say that if I didn't have a home you did? An how wed go canooing at Weewillo park Saturday nights and stay out till the fello that hired the boats out went to sleep. I was always a good spender. You know that, but thrifty. Thats me all over, Mable.

I was comin back to camp the other night and a guard stopped me and says "Who goes there?" an I says without thinkin "Me an Mable every Saturday night." Thats the way I am now.

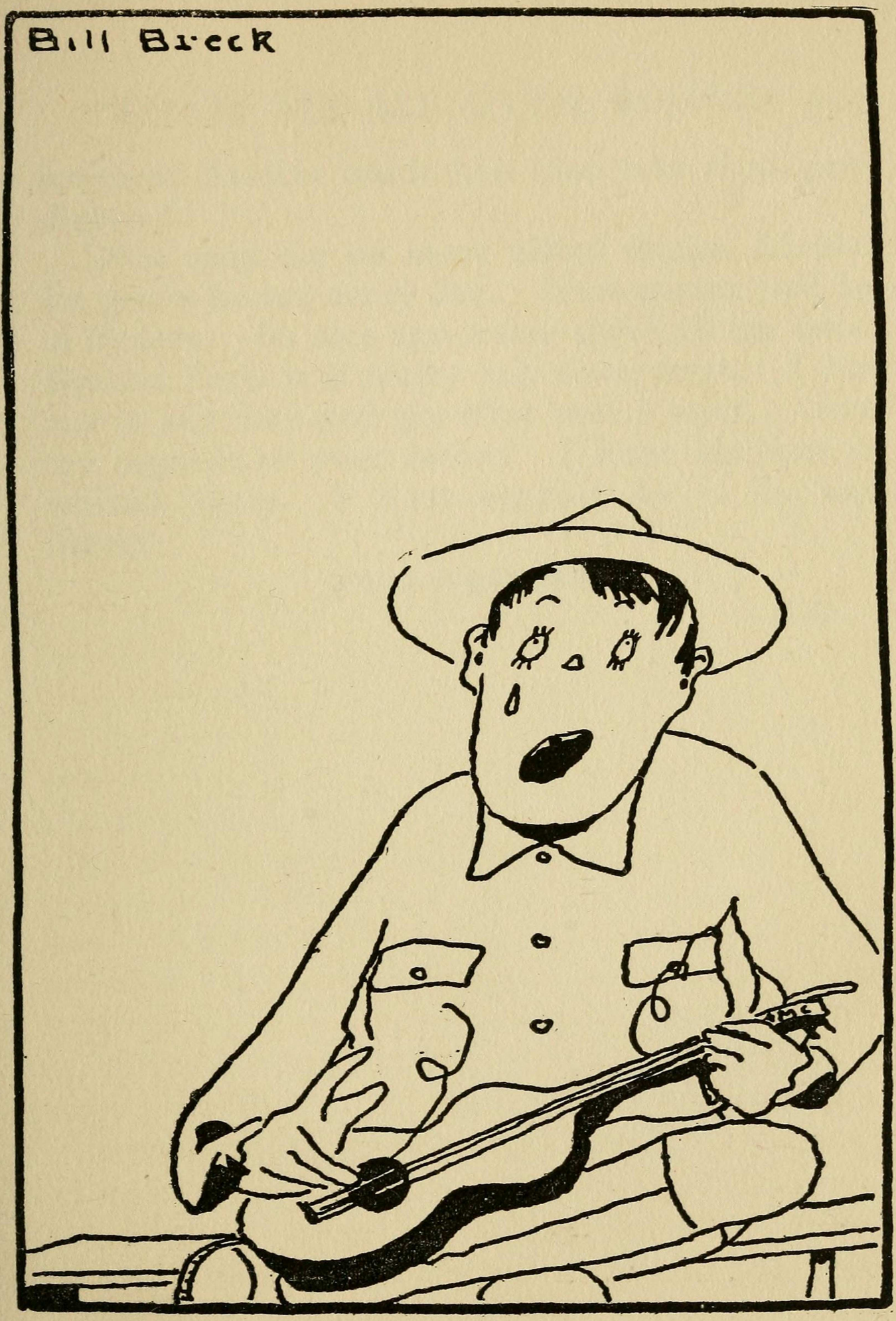
Max Glucos says poetry. Spring hits him that way. Some gets hay fever, some rash and others poetry. He says one thing that starts "In the spring a young mans fancy vests and socks come into view." He says a fello named Burns wrote it. Angus says Burns was a hot skotch. But I guess you wouldnt understand that.

Were going to have a divishun show. Of course every body in the divishun isnt goin to be in it. A lot of them has to be detailed to watch it. They asked me what I could do and I said most anything but Id like to say a piece called Gungadien. Its a piece I came across in a book by a fello I never heard of so I didnt think any of the fellos would know it. They told me to report at the mess shack an theyd fix me up. When I went they told me I was electrician cause anybody could recite pieces but they had to have

a fello with a bean on him to be electrician. They told me they was goin to hold me for an emergency. If the show went rotton an everybody got throwin things then theyd send me out.

Fellos is funny, Mable. Most of em when you ask em say they cant do nothin. Then if they think they aint goin to be urged they say there rotton but theyll have a try at it. Then when they get down rehersin they get so pleased with themselves they dont want to quit an give nobody else a chance. Its part of the electricians job to get them away when they get through. One fello plays a ukaylaly and sings Howareyoun songs. He thinks there so sad that he almost cries every time. We think so too but it makes us mad instead.

Thank your mother for the spring tonic she sent me. Its funny that a bottle of medicine was the first thing that ever came through the post office without bein in pieces. I cant say much for the taste. I guess thats why it got by the post office so well. Your mother rote me to take it regular cause it put iron in my blood. Angus says we got enough stuff to lug around now without ballisting our insides with iron. After he tasted it he said that if he had to have iron in his blood hed rather swallo a couple of nails and



"HE THINKS THERE SO SAD THAT HE ALMOST CRIES"

let them dissolve inside him than take them predigested.

Dont send me no more nitted things, Mable. Its gettin hotter every day. Next winter well be in France. Its nice and warm there all the time. Besides Paris is a pretty fair sized town. I can run in any time and get what ever I want. Give my regards to your father. I hope his liver is workin again. I dont suppose he is by any chance.

yours regardless

Bill.

Dere Mable:

I got arrested for a week up at the artillery range. That aint a disgrace like bein arrested in the city though. Down here some of the nicest fellos does it. There aint no jale. I just live in a different tent. I guess they couldnt think of any place worse to live in than a tent. Im in with a good crowd. It makes a nice change from drillin. I got arrested for my watch bein slow. That shows how strict they are in the army.

While we was firin at the range the other day I was sittin on a hill with the fone takin messages from another hill. I was thinkin of you an gettin kind of dopy when some one says over the fone "This is the General." I says "How do you do sir." Curteus. Thats me all over, Mable. I guess he didnt here me though. He says "Were going to syncopate our watches." That was a new one on me Mable. I was goin to tell him that mine didnt need it. Its the one your father gave me an its been runnin in ragtime ever since I got it.

Then he says "When I say check its ten fifty five (10.55)." I thought he was exceedin his

authority but I didnt say nothin an when he said check I just passed it over. He waited a minute and then he says "When I say check its ten fifty seven (10.57)." It struck me that I might have worked that out myself but I didnt say nothin. Then he says after a minute. "When I say check its ten fifty nine (10.59)." Then just to save him trouble I says "I got a watch myself sir. And as a matter of fact your five minutes fast." I guess I was slow. But as I say bein in arrest aint no disgrace like bein in the city.

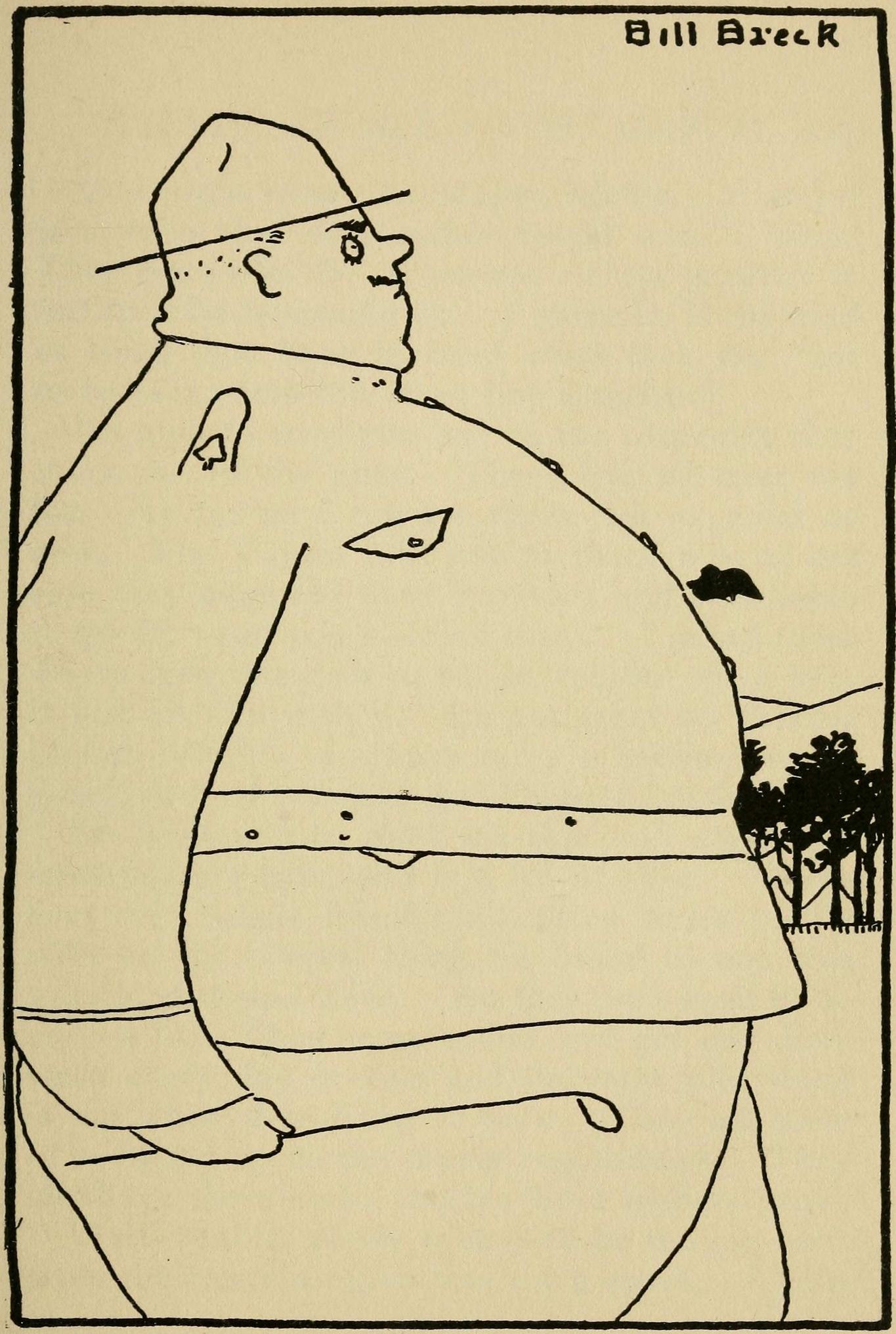
Im going to ask the Captin to let me off this telefone job. Whenever they dont know who to let out on they let out on the telefone man. What they want is a mind reader not a fello with brains. The other day the Captin says "Lay this spool of wire up that hill." He handed me a thing that looked like a trolly cable and weighed about as much. Then he went home to read the paper till I came back and told him it was done. Thats the way with Captins. When I got it all done they go and say to the Major "I laid the wire up the hill." An the Major says "That was a good job, Captin. You must be tired. Have a cigar." But I never say nothin. Thats me all over, Mable.

I took the wire like he said and laid it under a bush on top of the hill sos nobody could swipe it.

When I came down I showed him where it was on a little pictur I drew him. An to here him talk youd think hed never asked me to take it up the hill at all.

Yesterday we was firin into the middle of a field where there wasnt a livin thing to hit as far as I could see. If the Captin had to pay for these torpetoes I bet hed be more careful of them. He was awful excited though. He came up an gave me a lot of numbers to fone to his battery. He didn't say what to do with them an nothin happened. That got him sore. It aways does. Captins thinks you ought to know what to do without tellin you. He started to take it out on me bein the nearest. He says "Get somethin off quick. Hurry up. Get somethin off quick." So just to humor him I took off my shirt as he hadnt specified. You cant do nothin right for a man like that though.

Im learnin a lot about cannons an there habits. There like horses. When you first get them there wild. The Captin told me that every other battery but his was awfully wild. He has trouble with his though cause the other day they telefoned up that theyed just broken one of his guns. I guess he likes em better wild cause he got awful sore. But you couldnt do anything right for the Captin.



"THEY GET AWFUL FAT, OF COURSE"

You ought to see the Major, Mable. A major is a fello that only comes round once a week. They get awful fat of course. Ours is taller in bed than he is standin up. I guess he is the kind of thing they have in mind when they say "not to be taken into the front line trenches."

Im goin to send you one of the torpetoes they shoot out of the guns. There lyin all over the lot. As far as I can see there just as good as new. The Captin said not to touch any of em case they mightent have exploded and was liable to go off when you handled them. I asked them where they was goin to but he couldnt see a joke if you hit him with it. Im not takin no chances though Mable. I always carry a hammer and I pound each one of them good before I pick em up.

Im beginning to think all this stuff about the mountin ears bein wild is a lot of fake. I been out with Angus MacKenzie three times huntin stills an the nearest thing we found to one was a fello what sold Bevo. An they dont seem to be very wild. They come round and get our dirty wash every day or two and the only wild thing is me when they bring it back. They all seem to be mixed up on the shavin regulashuns. They all shave there necks and let there wiskers grow.

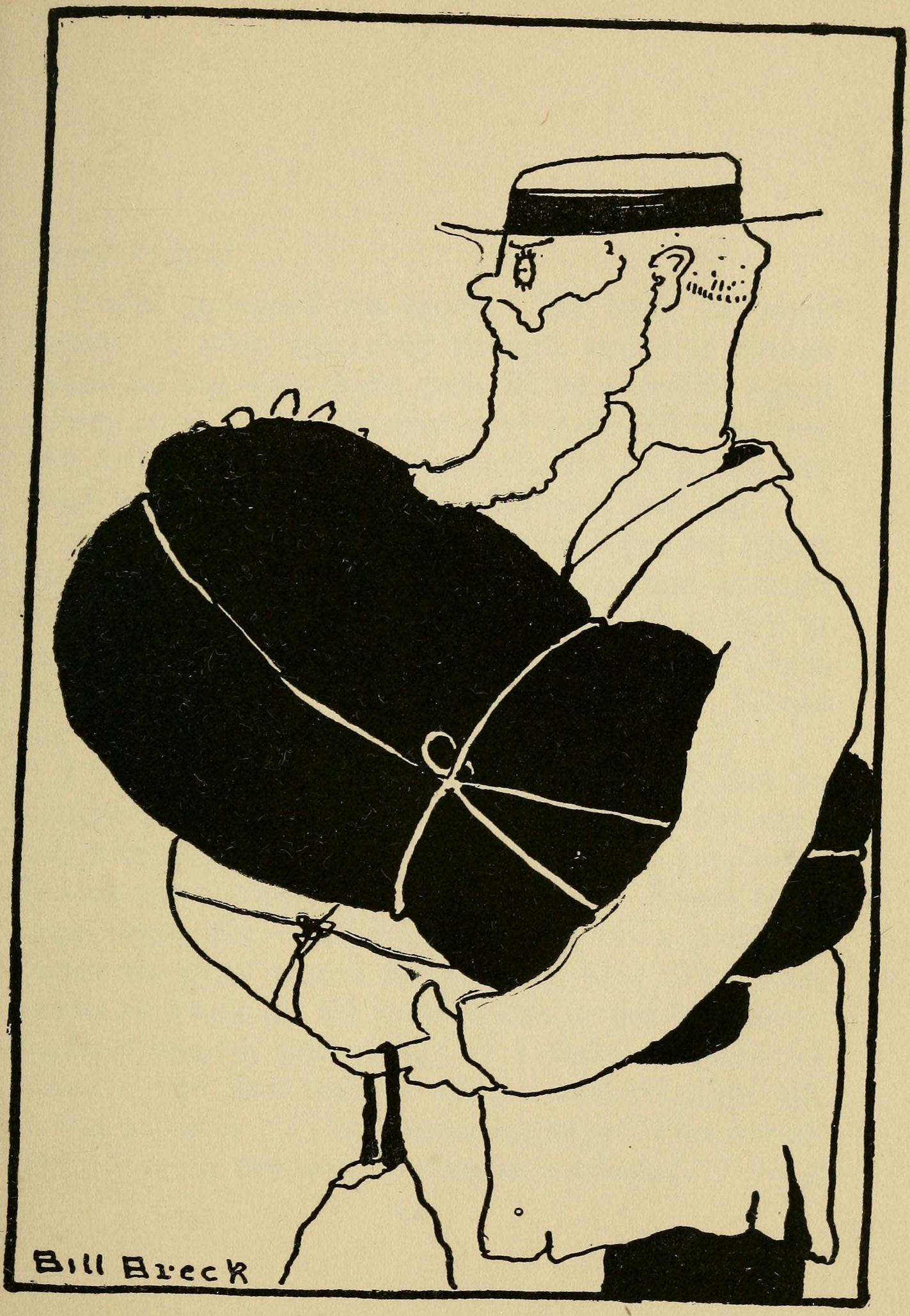
Well, Mable, pretty soon well be coming back from the range an goin into town again. I been

away so long I bet William S. Hart has grown a beard. When you rite I wish youd look up and see when lent is sos I could give up a little somethin. The way a fello loses track of national holidays down here is awful.

Give my regards to your mother and as far as Im concerned to your father to.

Yours till better times

Bill.



"THEY COME AND GET OUR DIRTY WASH"

Dere Mable:

I aint arrested no more. Im back to work again. I aint worrying though cause if things keeps on the way there goin Ill be arrested again pretty soon. I know now why they call it arrest. No drill or nothin. All a fello has to do all day is go around with a pick and shovel and dig.

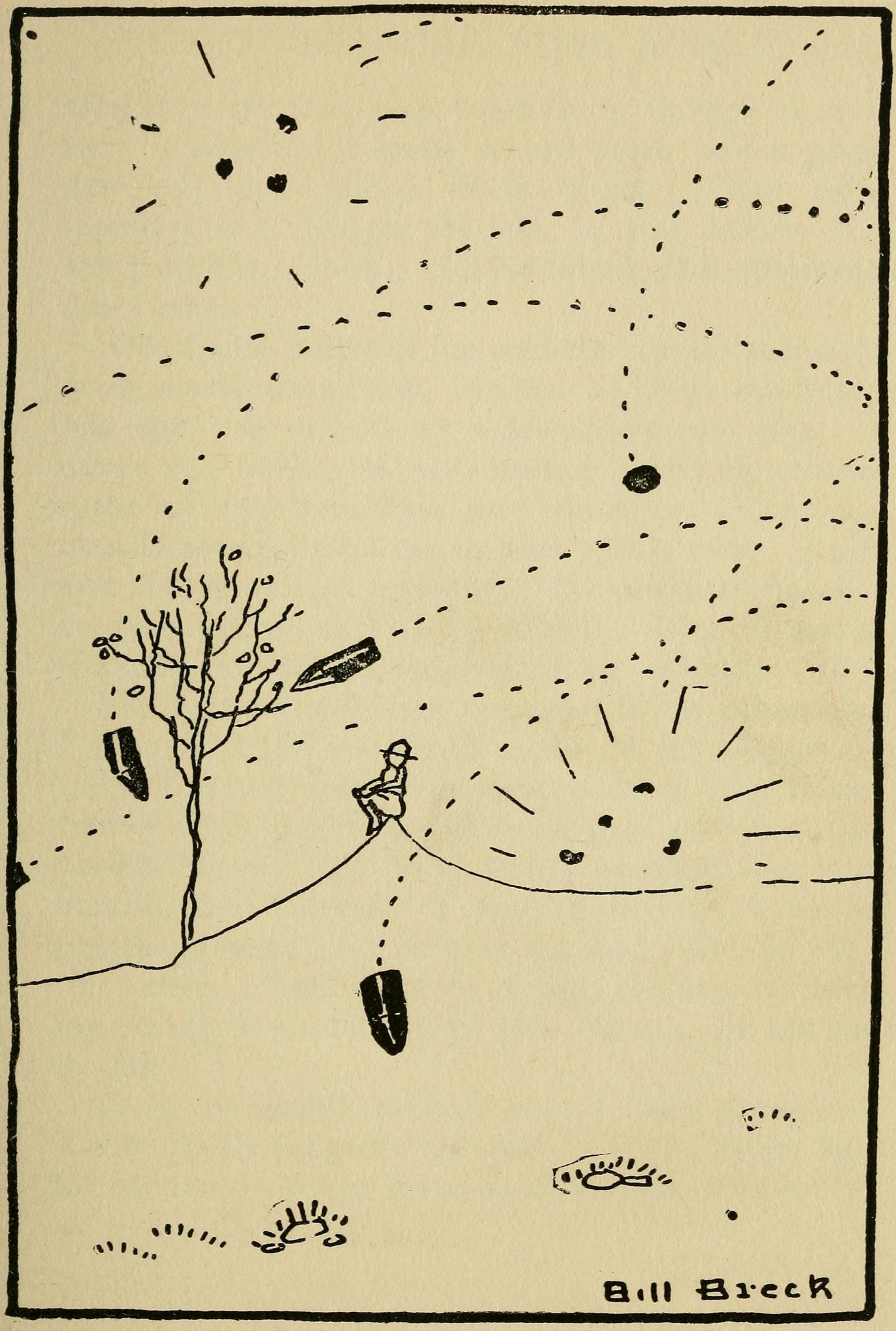
Were still firin away at the range but we havnt hit it yet. If they keep firin amunishun around much longer they wont have nothin left to fire at the Germans but the guns. Eh Mable? Thats the kind of thing Im always sayin in line. Keeps the fellos from gettin depresed.

I learned one thing about artillery. It aint as dangerous as I thought. They fire at what they call a target but it aint like any target I ever saw. It aint got circles round it or nothin. Every time they shoot they make a little dot on a piece of paper to show where the torpeto hit. The idea seems to be to hit all around the target but never to land one on top of it. If I was out there Id make a bee line for the target and sit tight till it was all over. Then someone says "The center of impact hit the target clean as a whissle." And

they all seem awful pleased. From all Ive seen if the Germans will only land me on the head with a center of impact I wont feel Ive got any kick coming.

I was out with Angus MacKenzie on a still hunt an an autymobile came along what belonged to a fello what had two sons in the army. I could tell cause it had a flag on the front with two stars on it. It stopped in front of us. The fello what owned it belonged to the cavalry cause he had a yello hat cord on. He leaned out and says "Dont you see that flag?" I says "yes, sir, I was just simpathizing with em." That kind of went home I guess cause he got red an says "You report this thing to your battery commander immedeately." So when I got home I told him that a fello what owned a big car had two sons in the army. I had to call him out from mess to tell him an he says what the this that and the other did he care. If you do what your told you get in trouble and if you dont you do to.

The Captins gone to Fort Silly now to learn somethin. I just told Angus MacKenzie I thought hed get more at Fort Levenworth. But thats a tecknickle joke, Mable. Of course you wont get it. I guess the Lieutenant thought he was in the audience department or somethin cause right away after the Captin left he came down and



"IT AINT AS DANGEROUS AS I THOUGHT"

said now he was goin to make a battery out of us. I told him I knew where there was a good dry cell just above New York. That fello wouldnt laff though, Mable, if Joe Miller hisself told him a joke. All he thinks of is smoothin out horses.

The feelin between me and the horses seems to grow worse every day, Mable. I think my horse has got me mixed up with somebody else. I never did nothin to him except bring him down some of my breakfast one morning. The sargent is always tellin me to pick up his feet. I tell him theres no call for that. He seems to be able to do it pretty well all by hisself. He has em in the air most of the time when Im around.

He kept pesterin me though till the other day I thought Id show him I could do it. I put his front foot through the spokes of a wheel and tied it then grabbed the back one and gave an awful heave. Its a way Ive worked out for handlin bad horses. I figured hed have to be pretty good to stan on one leg and kick me with the other. But when he found he couldnt kick me he lay down on top of me. Mean, Ill tell the world.

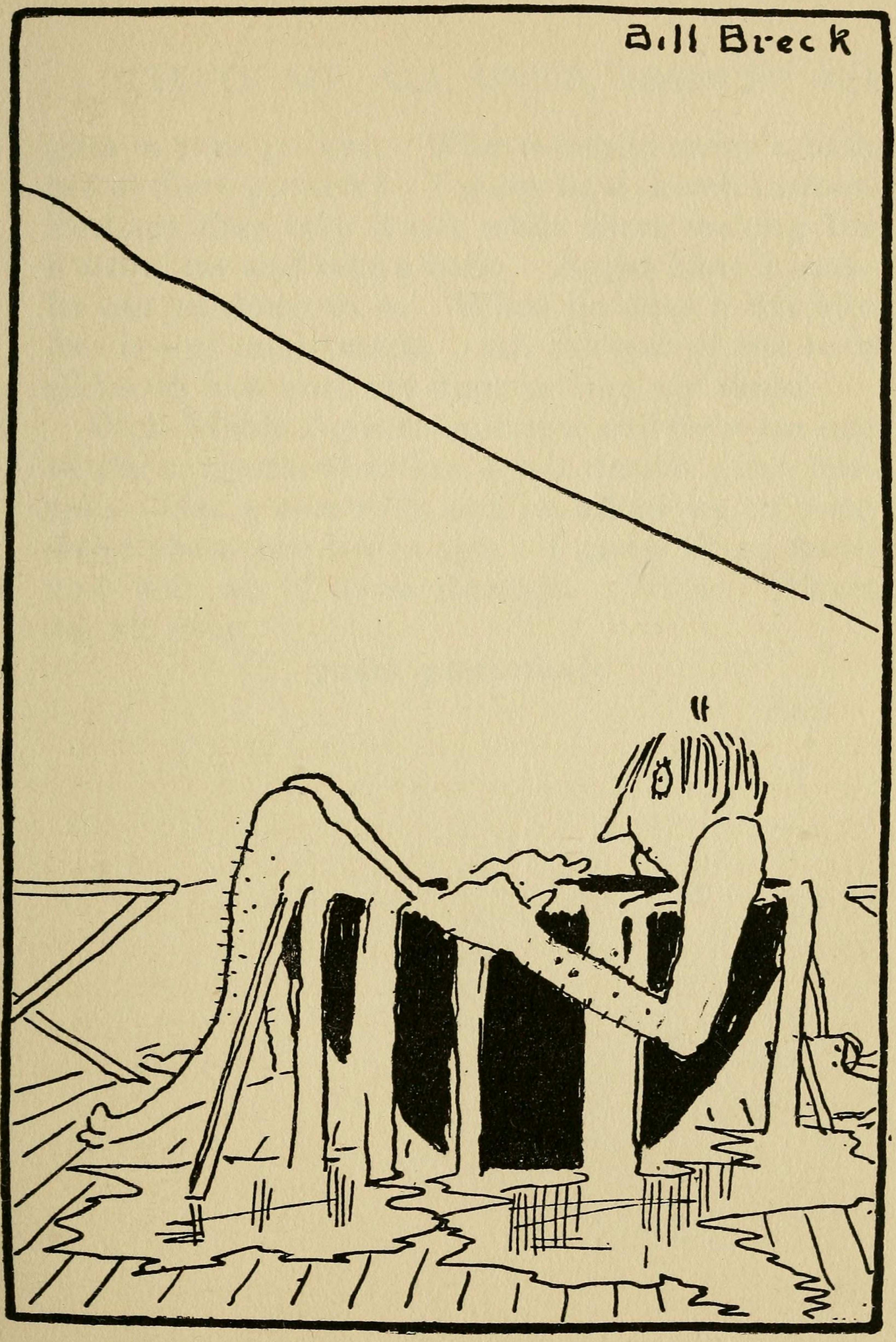
Now the stable sargent says I hurt the horse. Thats stable sargents all over. If the horse had bit my head off hed have thought it was an awful

joke. All I say is that Im not as strong as a horse even if I did win a lot of cups at high school an if I can stand on to legs a horse can to only hes to lazy.

Max Glucos and Angus and me goes over to see the mountin ear what sells Bevo once in a while. Were tryin to catch him some day when hes wild. He aint been wild so far ceptin one day when we forgot to pay him. Angus says they only get wild certain times of the year. Angus wont drink Bevo. He says it looks the same and tastes the same but it aint got the same influence with him.

The mountin ears hate niggers. This one has been tryin to get us to go on what he calls a coon hunt ever since we been up here. Were goin with him this week. They hunt them at night. I suppose thats so you cant see them so well. He takes the dogs sos they can smell the coon. I guess the mountin ears got a cold. The coon climbs a tree, then you cut the tree down and then the coon of course has to come down to. I wonder what they do with them when they get them. It seems foolish to go to all that trouble when you can find a dozen of them in every little house you come to.

Angus has got a rubber bath tub sent him. He thinks its great cause you can fold it so small it



"ANGUS LIKES IT CAUSE HE CAN SIT DOWN IN IT"

goes in your pocket. Who wants to carry a bath tub in there pockets? I guess its a skotch custom. Perhaps they take it out while there waiting for a street car and take a bath. Angus likes it cause he can sit down in it. When he does it fits him like it was tailor made. All the rest of the bath slides off him onto the floor or into my shoes.

Well Mable I got to quit now and help out one of the sargents what has a job cleanin some harness. Hes a nice fello and he asked me to come down about two hours ago. I guess Ill go down now and see if there through. Willin. Thats me all over.

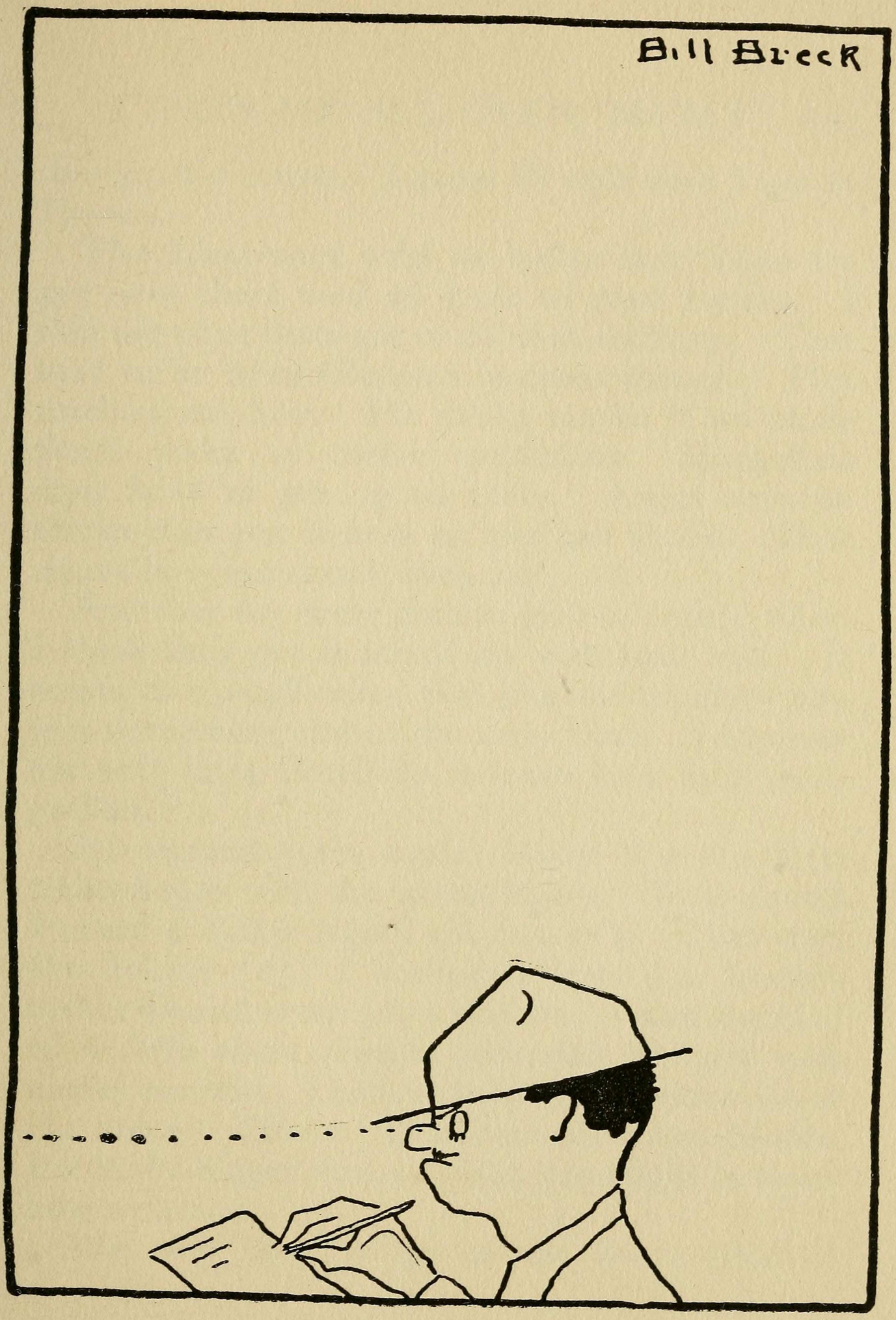
yours patrioticaly

Bill.

Dere Mable:

Its so foggy that we cant fire at the range. I dont see what difference that makes though. I havnt seen nothin since we started but a bunch of trees in front of the guns. Im goin to rite you a letter if the top sargent dont remember that he aint put me on no detail. We leave the guns out all night. Just sos well have somethin more to guard I guess. Were supposed to take turns guarding. As far as I can make out that means me and the rest of the battery altercate every other night. I suppose they think some of the mountin ears is goin to take one of the guns and go drivin with it. Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, says they have to guard em sos they wont go off. That sounds kind of silly to me though, Mable.

I been raisin a mustash. That is I was till yesterday when I cut it off while I was shavin and thinkin of you. I was sorry cause it was comin good. You could see it as plain as day with the naked eye. (Thats just an expreshun, Mable.) In a couple of places I could catch hold of it. They say nothin grows very good down here,



"IF THE TOP SARGENT DONT REMEMBER"

though, but cotton. I guess Ill wait until I get to France.

The Lieutenant told us today that when we got over there wed all have to read meters. I cant see what thats got to do with artillery. That used to be Max Glucoses business though. Hes teaching me how. He thinks maybe if we study theyll make us meter spechulists. Spechulists dont have to get up so early. Angus says he thinks they put meters on the gas shells. That shows how systumatic they are.

And they say there goin to give us Infield rifles. I think they got it mixed up with base ball. It seems as though when you join the artillery you join everything else at the same time. I suppose the next thing theyll do is learn us a little navigashun.

Ive started savin again Mable for the little white house with the green blinds. Last month I saved a dollar eighty six ($1.86). That with five dollars ($5) I borrowed from Joe Loomis makes almost seven ($7) dollars. I aint the kind of a fello thats always bothering his girl with money matters. I believe in keepin business out of the home. Close. Thats me all over, Mable. But in the bigger things I think you ought to know how we stand.

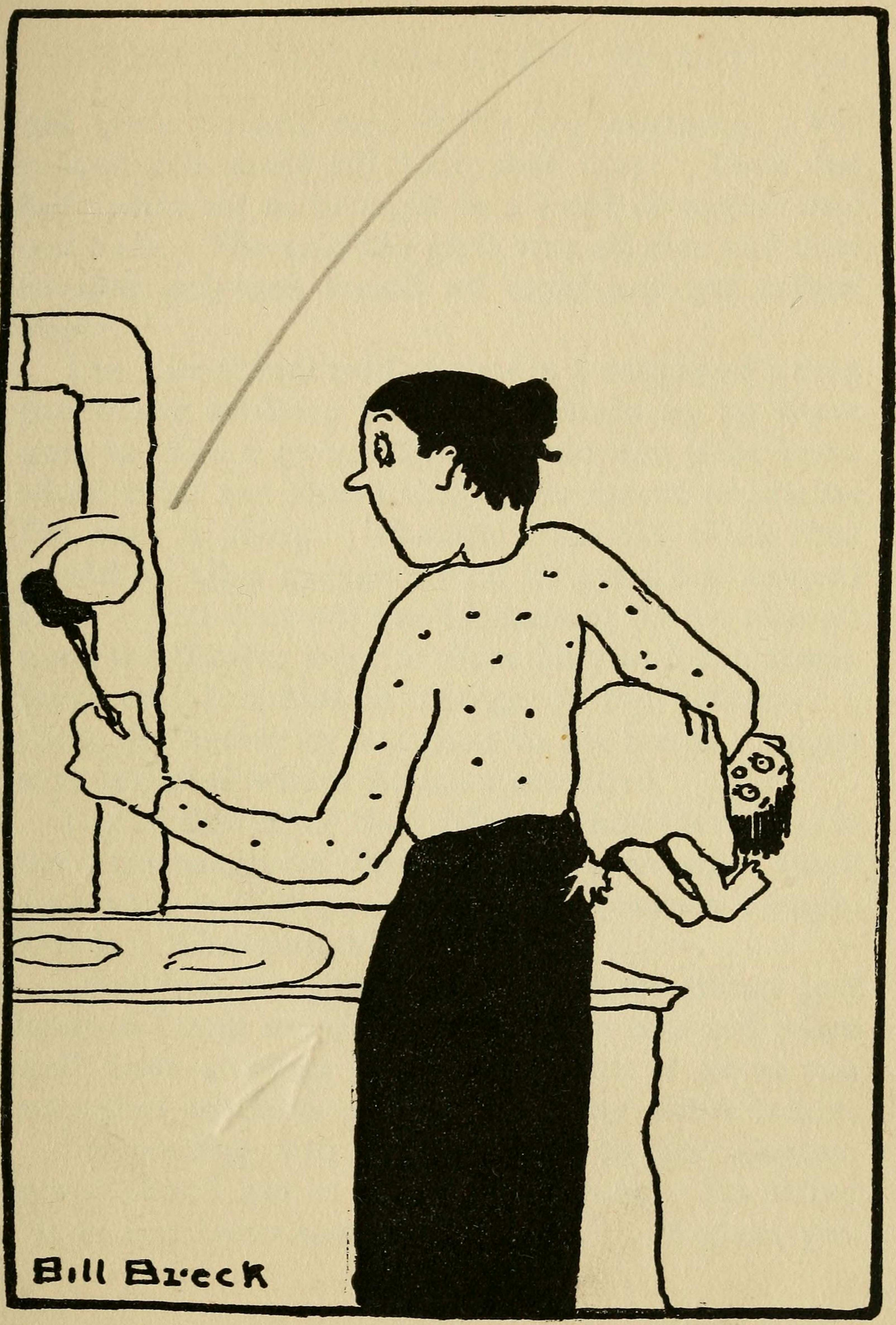
We may have to go at the house kind of

gradual. Buy the blinds first say. But theys one thing about it. Ive been ruffing it so long in the army that there aint no kind of hardship thatll bother me.

The mountin ears has funny customs, Mable, and yello dogs without any stummucks. Angus an I was out ridin last Sunday lookin for a still an got cold. We stopped at a cabin an a fello came out with a round hair cut an says "Howdy boys, wont ye light an strip?" Angus says that he didnt have no figger for that but wed come in an get warm. Eh Mable?

Once in a while when we cant eat what the cook gives us which is most of the time we go down the road to a mountin ears wife what makes pan cakes. She always carries a kid under her arm like an over coat. It looks as if the kids head was on the stove most of the time. Angus says she greases the griddle with it. I dont know about that, but the mountin ears is awful tough people.

Me an some of the other fellos went to a mountin ears party in a little town near here the other night. There was a lot of girls there with funny noses. When they saw us they all ran in a corner and laffed at us. That made me kind of sore cause we hadnt invited ourselves but been ast. The lady that ast us said the girls had there



"SHE ALWAYS CARRIES A KID UNDER HER ARM"

old close on and was ready for anything. We played old maid till half past nine. Then the lady what ast us brought in a bowl of apples and our hats. She said the girls was all nice and they couldnt galyvant round all night and get talked about.

The Lieutenant told us that in a couple of weeks the whole artillery brigade is comin up an there goin to have a garage fire. I told him if he knew about it so far ahead that there wasnt no excuse for such a thing. Though I should think that would be all a garage would be good for around here. You cant tell the Lieutenant nothin though since the Captin went to Fort Silly to learn something and left him in charge of the battery. I think the authority has gone to his head. Angus says its gone where its least crowded.

I read the other day, Mable, that there makin the cups rough on the bottom now so youll think theres sugar in them. They cant fool me though. Quick. Thats me all over.

Dont feel you got to stop nittin me things just because I cant use them now. You cant tell when well have another winter. Besides it gives you somethin to think about when you sittin talkin.

Im sending you a new piece on the phoneygraph that I got in the ten cent store. Its called "look out Germany, I am comin." It gives you

an idea of the way I feel. I got to stop now an go an see some fellos in another battery. I just herd the top sargent blow his whissle.

yours till I rite again

Bill.

Dere Mable:

I would have rote you before this only the fellos in my tent is too tite to buy any paper. It wouldnt take much, though, to tell you what I been doin. If I ever rote a book about my adventures same as that fellow Empty what rote the book called "Over the top and go to Hell" it would run in competeshun with the Manual of Inferior Guard. Im gettin so I can only sleep four hours at a time. The only trouble is that it works the other way. When I do happen to miss a day not bein on guard I have to go to sleep after I work for two hours. Of course that interferes with the drill skedule, Mable, but you cant explain nothing to a top sargent.

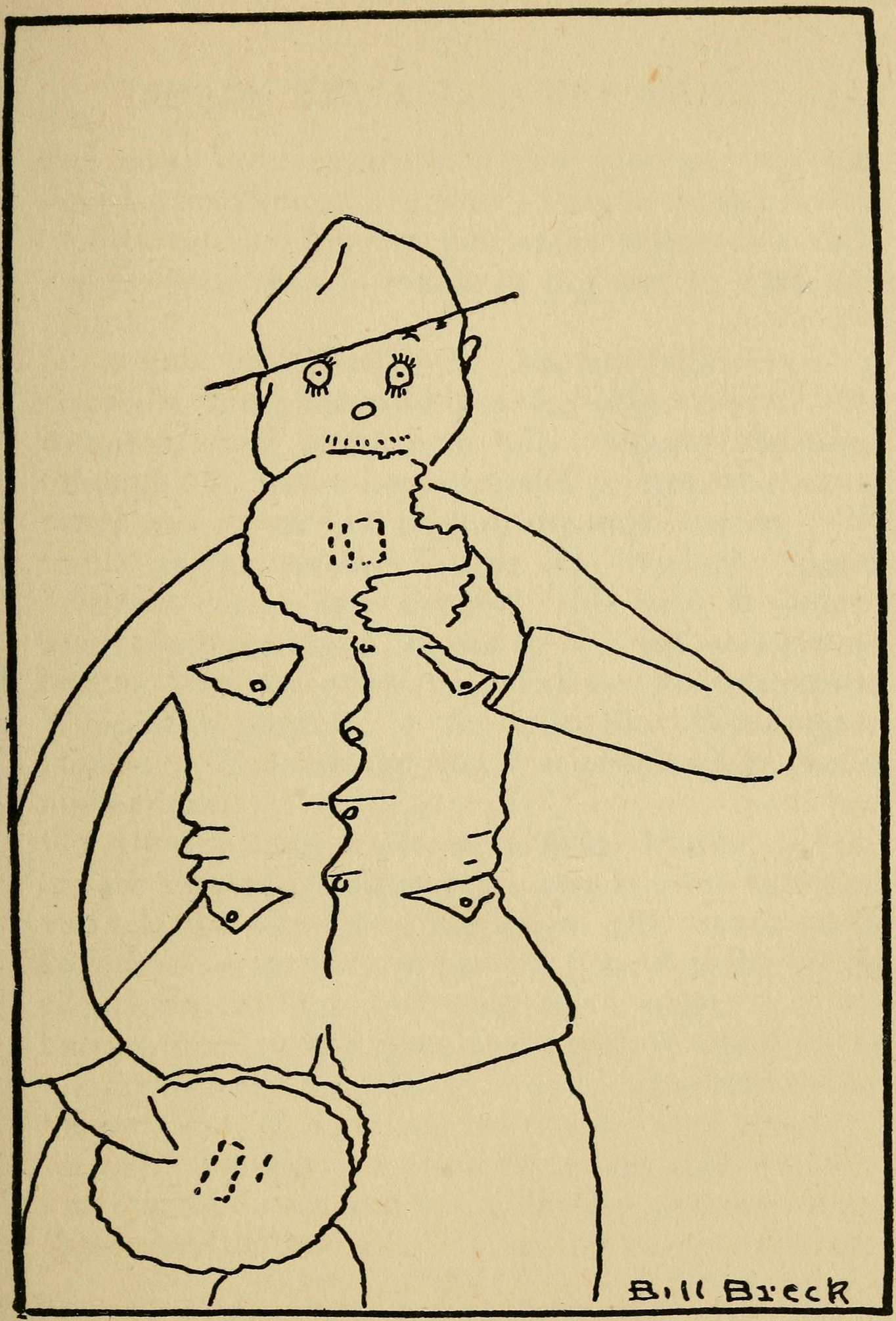
I overslept the other mornin. I didn't here the horn. I dont see how they expect a fello to here the horn if hes a sleep. If he herd it hed be awake. I got out before they started firin anyway. I had to go without breakfast to do it. I wasnt goin to complain about that, though. Soldierin every minit. Thats me all over, Mable. The Lieutenant got awful sore. I guess he was mad cause hed got up earlier than he had to. He said

he was goin to prefer charges and asked me what I had to say. I told him every man to his taste and if he was askin my opinion Id prefer to go back to bed. Awful excitable fello, the Lieutenant.

I saw a letter on the tops desk yesterday about the meddles a fello can get now. Theys all kinds of different ones. Somes from Congress and somes from the Ward Apartment. Im goin to rite my congresman as soon as I finish this letter and get a bunch of them. Of course I wouldnt wear them till I do somethin pretty good but I figure out that itll take so long to get em over there that it would be better to get em now and take em over with me.

Im goin to tell the congresman to that as far as Im concerned Id like to go to France as soon as I can. Its gettin nice and warm now for travelin. I want to see the Champs Eliza. Thats a street in Paris that was named after Queen Elizabeth. But thats history, Mable, I dont suppose you understand. They tell me its even better lookin than Broadway or Fortysecond (42nd) street.

I saw in the Sarahcuse papers that they thought the artillery was goin there to expand. If I expand any more, Mable, Im going to bust my belt. I dont know why it is. I dont eat nothin outside



"I DONT EAT NOTHIN OUTSIDE OF MEAL HOURS EXCEPTIN A FEW PIES"

of meal hours exceptin a few pies and the like but I get fatter and fatter. I never think of eatin when Im not hungry like some fellos. A fello what does that is makin a pig out of hisself I think.

Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, was out guardin the guns with me the other night. He went to sleep on an aunt hill. I guess the aunts thought he was a new mountin or somethin cause they was all standin on him the next mornin. To look at the sunrise I says, eh Mable? Angus didnt seem to care though. He says Napoleun had the same thing happen to him and was always tellin how an army traveled on his stummick, Nepoleun, Mable, is the fello that Washington licked. They named that three colored ice cream after him.

All day long while were firin, Mable, a fello from Brigade headquarters stands near the guns and looks through a big glass with horns on it. I guess hes to lazy to hold it hisself so he brings out camera legs and puts them under it. He looks through the glass and seems to see a lot of numbers that he tells to a fello what stands beside him. I dont see where he sees them. I looked through the glass the other day while he was eatin lunch and I couldnt see a thing except the side of the hill. Then he came back and

looked through it and read off a string of them. The fello beside him rites down everything he says. I looked over his shoulder the other day. It looked more like a Jewish curse to me than anything else.

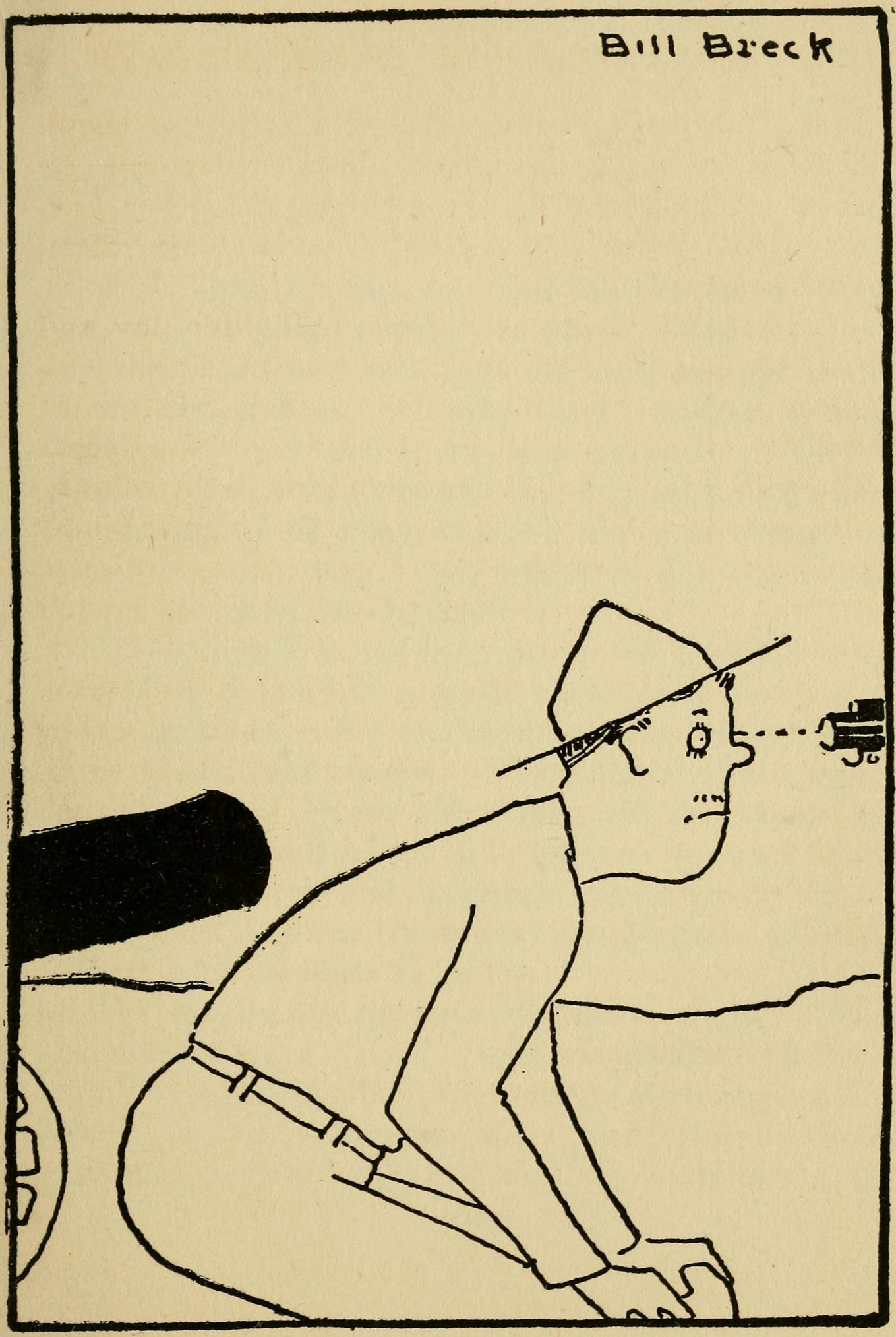
The Lieutenant came down the other day and told us to get all shined up cause the Sanitary inspector was comin out to look us over. I thought hed be all dressed up in white with white tennis shoes like fancy bakers and sanitary barber shops. He wasnt though. He just had on a regular uniform. I didnt think he was speshully sanitary. It may have been sunburn though. I couldnt tell from where I stood.

He had a fello with him they said was from the audience department. I know now why they call it the audience department. All they do is come round and watch us work. Thats a branch I didnt know about till after Id joined this.

Well, Mable, I got to quit now and go and look at the Guard rooster to see if I answer sick call tomorrow mornin. They say the Germans is raisin the dickins. I wish theyd hurry up and get me over there.

yours eternally,
in haste

Bill.



"I COULDNT SEE A THING EXCEPT THE SIDE OF THE HILL"

Dere Mable:

I thought Id rite you and let you know they wasnt nothing particular to say. Theyve called off the firin for a few days till they can get some more amunishun. If theyd only scatter a few Germans out there it wouldnt be such an awful waste. Ive fired so much now I guess I could fire anything. Tell your mother the first thing Im going to do when I get home is fire the cook. Same old card, eh Mable?

Its nice and warm here now. We havnt used the Sibly stove for a week exceptin to keep our dirty wash in. An old nigger comes round once a week and takes it out. I cant figger that nigger out, Mable. From the looks of the wash he brings back he thinks I only got one leg and from the looks of the bill he hands me he thinks Im a sentapeed. Angus says hes not all there hisself. Thats why he loses so much.

We had a boxing fight the other night. The Lieutenant says they increase the moral. I dont think they do the non coms no good though when they see the wallop some of the fellos in their squad has got. Joe Loomis has been talkin so

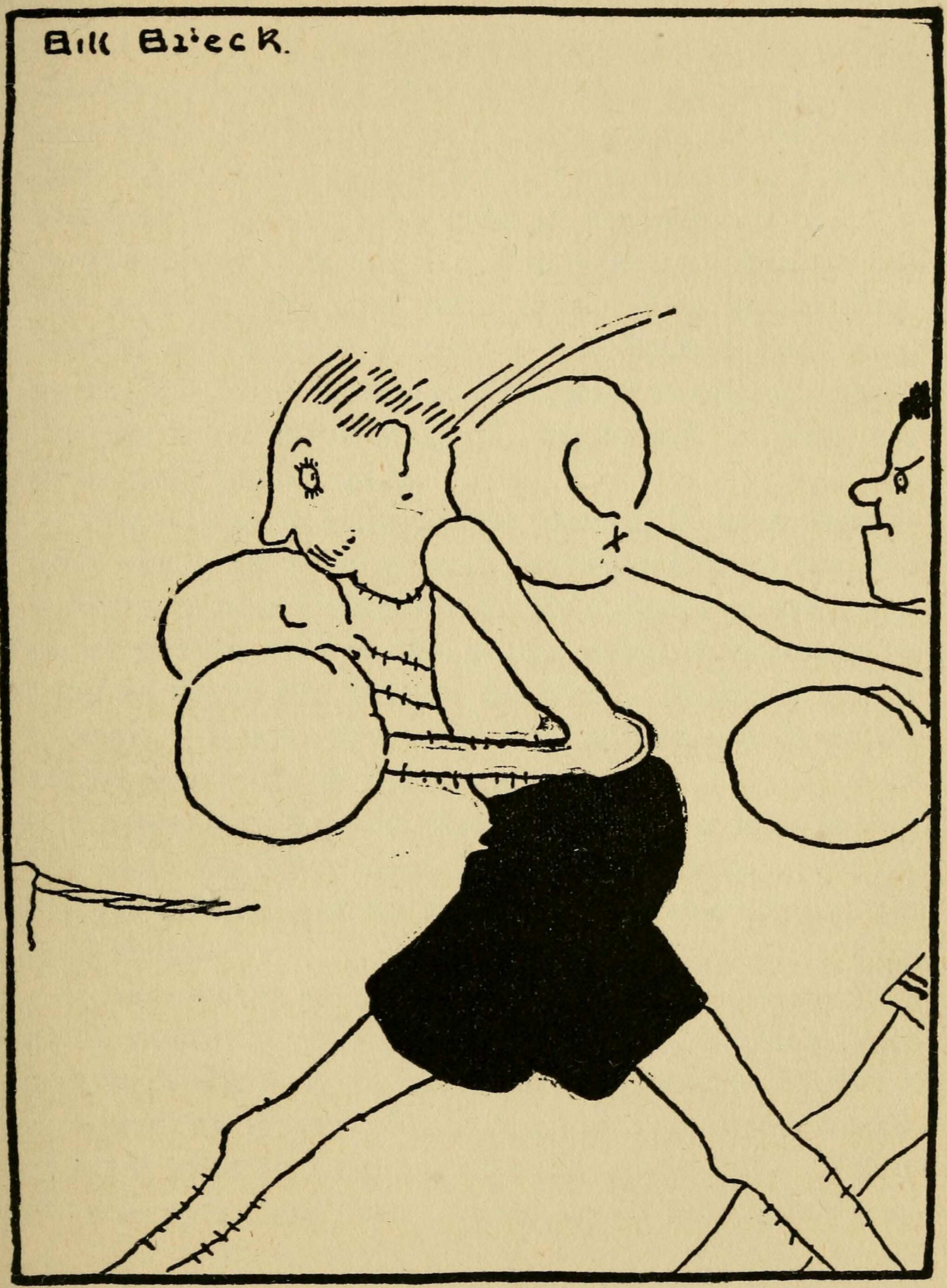
much about how he could lick the whole divishun with one hand behind his back that we got him to go in. I put some money on him at his advice.

I guess he made his mistake in not tyin his hand. Somebody told me he was fast. He was. He outran the other fello all the way. Angus says they ought to make speshul fighting rings with banked corners sos fighters could make better time.

Joe thinks he won yet. He says if he hadnt slipped and fell out of the ring on his elbow hed have nocked that fellos head offen his shoulders so hard it would have hurt somebody. Im glad I borrowed the money I bet on him. It might have been a total loss.

Im going to ask the Lieutenant to make me a bugler, Mable, sos I can find where buglers go between meals. Nobody ever sees a bugler except at mess and on payday. Ive asked a lot of fellos but nobody knows what becomes of them. I wouldnt want to be a bugler all the time. Its two much strain on a fellos face. As soon as I find out where they go Ill transfer back as a fighter.

I went into town the other night, Mable, and went to a dinner that me and a lot of other fellos was ast to. I sat next to a lady what didnt seem to have much on but a lot of jewels as far as I



"HE OUTRAN THE OTHER FELLO"

could see. Of course she was sittin at the table, Mable. I looked the other way all the time I was talkin to her cause I didnt want to embarass her. I was going to offer her my coat but I didnt see why I should take cold if she wanted to.

We didnt talk much. Once she looked at me for a long time and then says "You know, Mr. Smith, every time I take a hot bath I feel very guilty." All I said was "Because youre not sharing it with somebody I suppose." Then we didnt talk much again.

There was a lady across the table with turtle-hide eye glasses what was collectin things for the sufferin in the Palacestein. I asked her why she didnt put an add in the paper askin everybody to send in there old brown derbies. Nobody got it though. I was the only one at the whole table that a got a laugh out of it.

Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello was there. He says he likes that kind of a party. He is always full of get up and go from the minute he gets there.

I never saw so many dying relatives in my life as is comin by telegram every day. Have you got an epidermic or somethin up north, Mable? It seems as if everybody I know had been home at least once to help his grandmother die. None of em seem to care much for their relatives,

though, from the way they act when there startin home to watch them pass away. I asked the Lieutenant for a furlo. He wouldnt give it to me. Got it in for me just like the Captin did. I wish youd telegraph him that you died quietly and couldnt I come up for the funeral "on or about" the middle of the month.

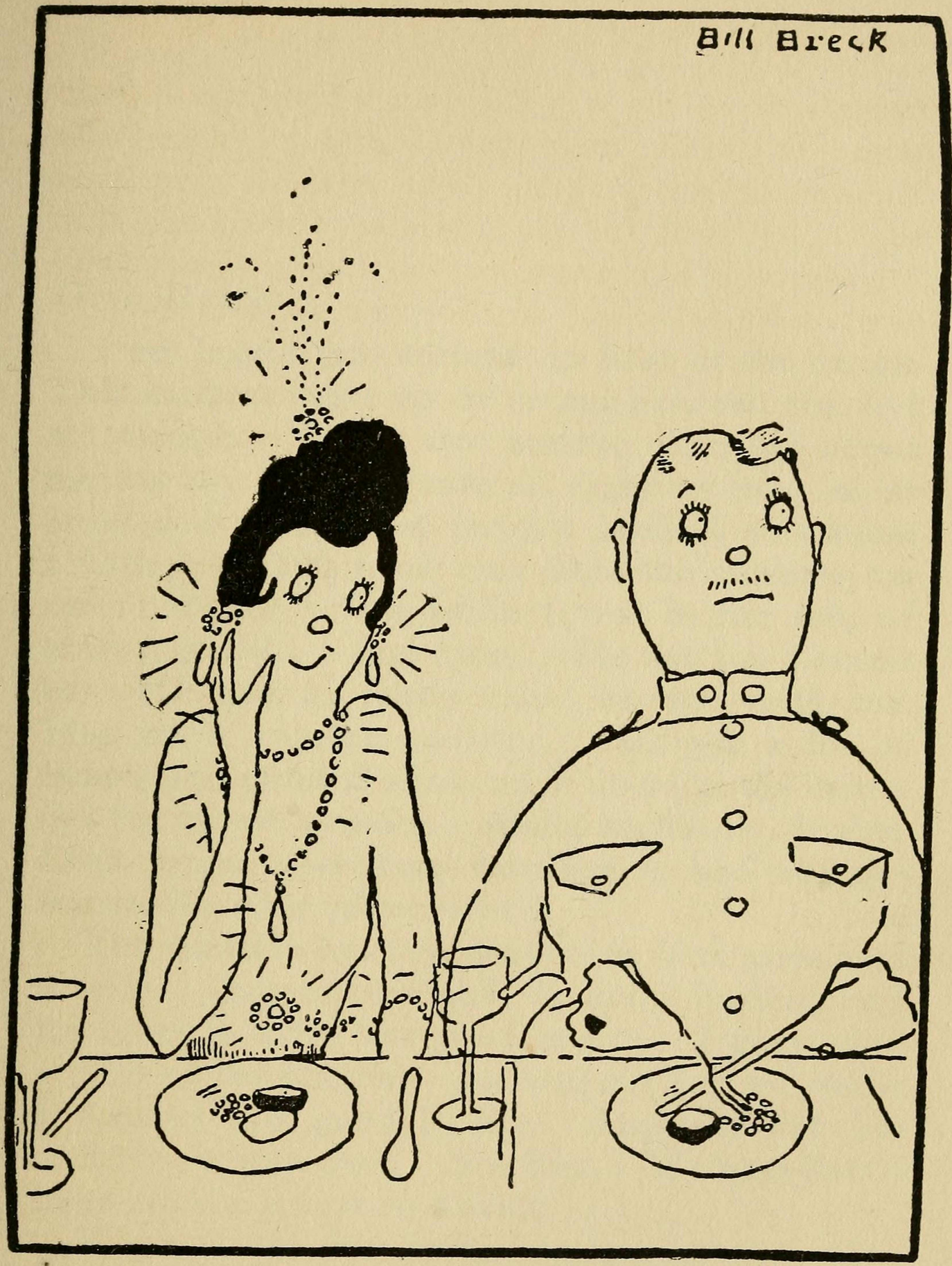
While we was firin at the range the other day a couple of fellos rode out by the targets lookin for shells. It was the first time wed seen anything worth while firin at. Everybody was right on there toes. I guess the Lieutenant didnt see em though cause he had us cease firin. Dopy. Thats the way he is all the time. I dont see how were ever going to learn nothin if we dont ceaze our opportunities.

I dont guess theres any use in my askin you if your havin a good time. I dont see how you could be under the circumstances. Just make the best of it Mable and as soon as me and the rest of the fellos can get things straightened out Ill come back and paint the canoe again.

until then

yours faithfully

Bill.



"I SAT NEXT TO A LADY WHAT DIDNT SEEM TO HAVE MUCH ON BUT A LOT OF JEWELS"

Dere Mable:

I am bustin into societie up here at the range. This needent make no difference between you and me though. There aint nothing stuck up about me but my hair. Thats all right so long as its good and wet. Last Sunday while I was takin a bath in a little town near here the minister ast me to dinner. Not while I was in the tub, of course, Mable. Just after. He ast Joe Loomis to. He had to really cause he was with me. Hes not a regular minister. Hes got a lot of money and pointed shoes an is down in the mountins for cronik azmuth. Awful highbrow, Mable. Dont know who Ring Lardner is and changes the needle after every record.

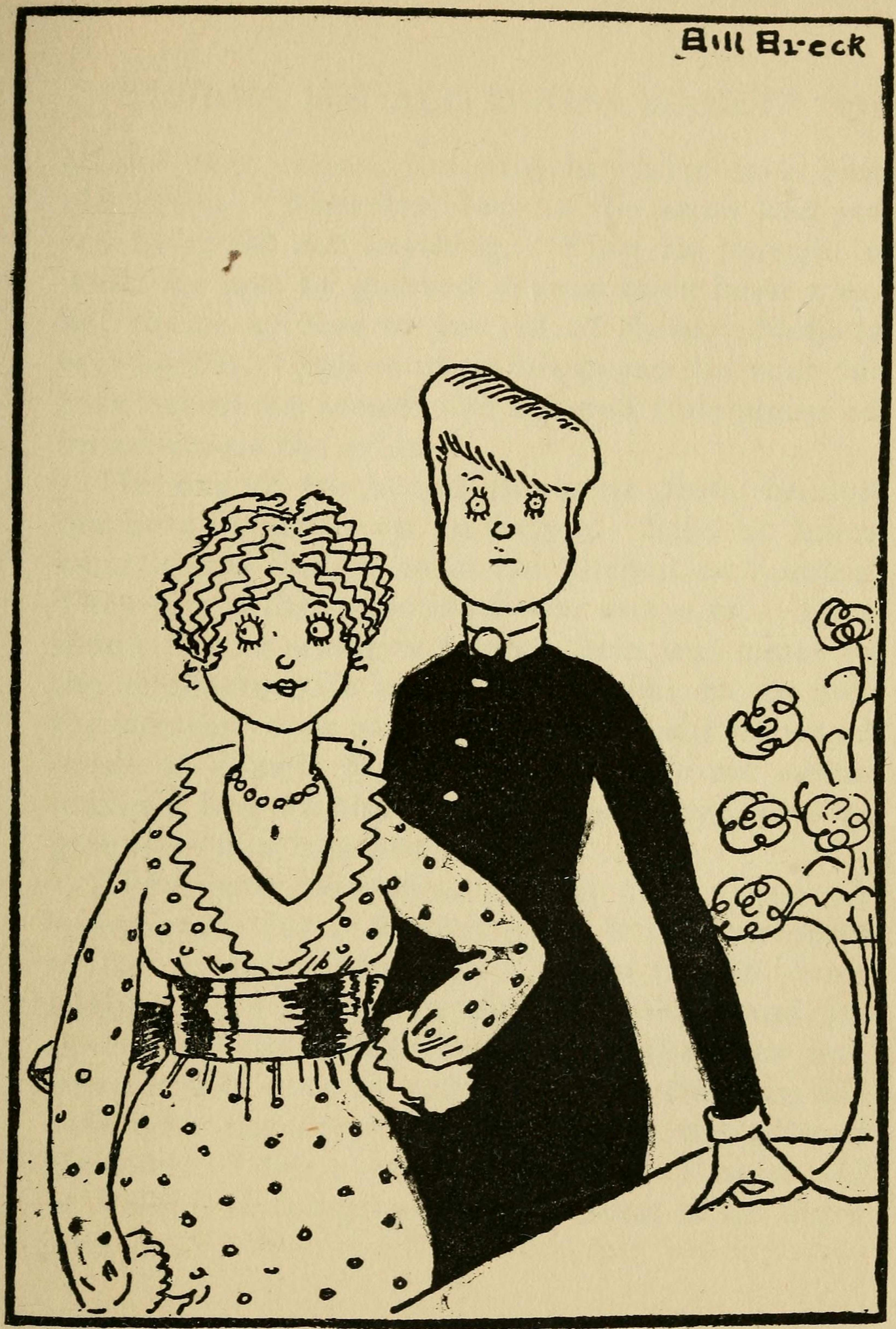
The minister has two daughters, both girls, and a wife. One of the girls is good looking and the other is more like youd expect. I guess shes a pillo of the church. Joe was ast for her while I amused the good looker. Anybody but Joe could have seen that. Not him. He kept buttin in an makin an ass of hisself.

We was ast for dinner at hapast one. Joe thought it would be politer not to run in an eat an

run out like it was a canteen so we went a little early. About noon. They played highbrow pieces on the phoneygraph. The kind that has only one tune on them an cost so much that everybody has to lissen. Joe dont know nothin about music of course. Right while K. Russo was havin an awful time he says if theyll speed it up he like to have a little dance.

The minit we sat down to dinner Joe started tellin one of his stories about how he almost got killed one time. They was all waitin for him to shut up sos the minister could say grace before the soup got all cold. Joe thought they were listenen to him. Thats somethin that aint ever happened to him before. He kept draggin it out and draggin it out. The only thing that finally stopped him was that he forgot the point. Then the minister put his nose in his soup and began sayin grace. Joe thought he was talkin to him and kept askin "Hows that and what say" all the time he was prayin.

I aint never goin out with that fello no more. I guess thats safe cause he wont never be ast. All the time durin dinner he kept sayin, "My gawd I hate to make such a hog of myself." Then the minister would look like hed lost some money and my girl would giggle. The ministers wife passed him some stuff she said was real old



"THE MINISTER HAS TWO DAUGHTERS—BOTH GIRLS"

spider corn cake. Joe said he didnt care how old it was. Since hed been in the army hed got sos he could eat anything. Then he thought a while an says he guessed it must have been a relief to the spiders to get rid of them. Nobody said nothin. Just to show his poyse Joe took his fork out of his mouth and speered four pieces of bread across the table.

He was all for keepin the same plate through dinner and gettin up an helpin. Said he knew what it was like to be in the kitchen on Sunday. They forgot the coffee till dinner was over. They didn't like to waste it I guess bein war times so the ministers wife ast us if wed like to go into the drawin room an have it. Joe said he wasnt much at drawin but My gawd if he sat round makin a hog of hisself any longer theyd have to give it to him in a bed room.

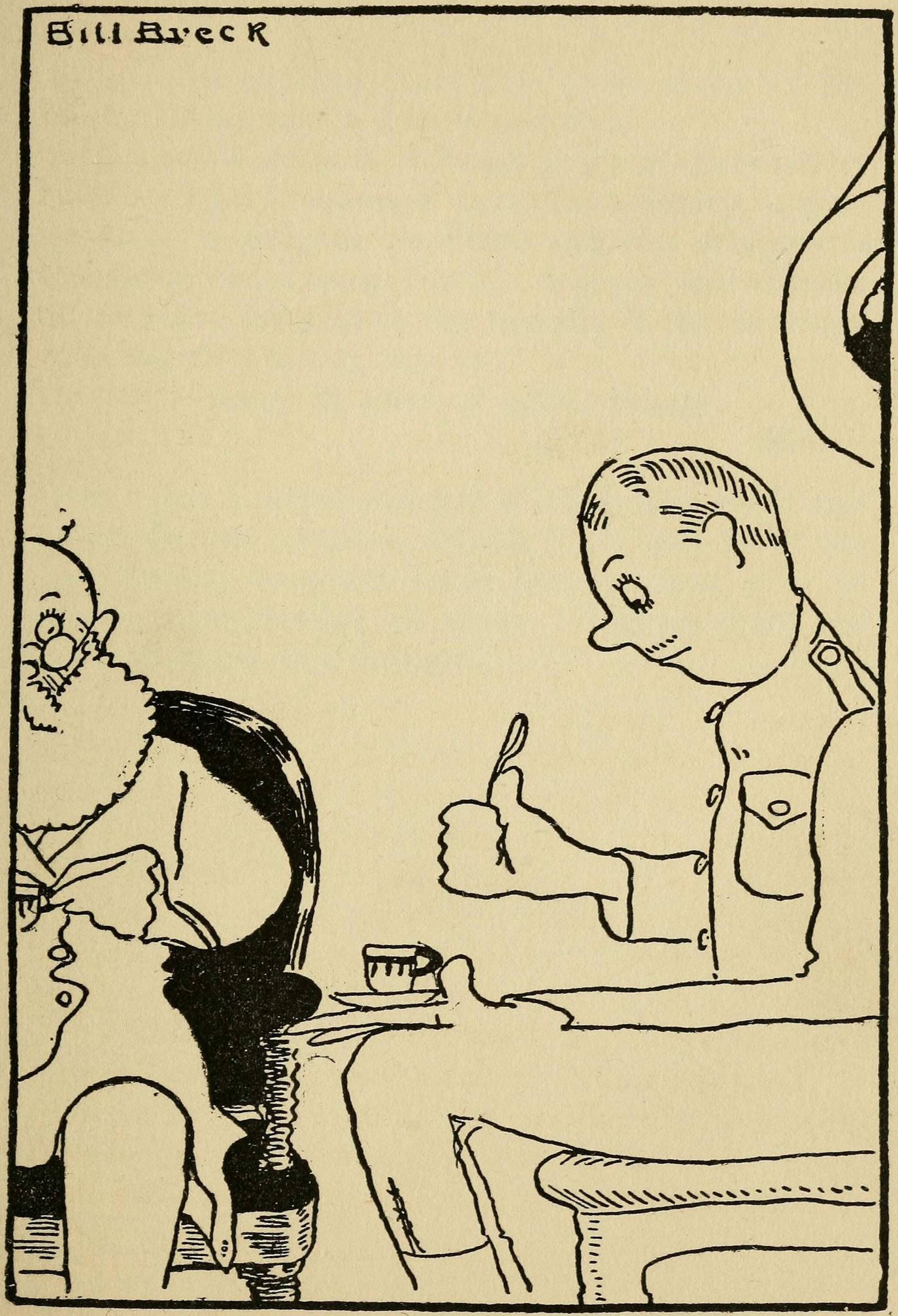
They gave us coffee in egg cups. Seein I wasnt payin for it I didnt guess it was my place to say nothin. Manners. Thats me all over, Mable. We got talkin about one thing and another. I was tellin them about the war and when it was goin to end. Joe was sittin on the sofa with the other daughter pickin the sole of his shoe. I felt sorry for him cause I knew hed be lookin at fotygraphs pretty soon if he didnt buck up.

The ministers wife asked me what I thought of wimmins sufrage. I said I thought it was a good thing but you couldnt tell. Thats the beauty of always keepin read up on these things. If you happen to get outside the army for a little while and meet some inteligent people you can talk on pretty near anything. Then she turned to Joe and ast how he felt. Joe jumped like somebody sprung out at him an says "A little sick to my stummick thanks but thatll be all right as soon as things set a bit."

The good lookin one said she thought our officers was awful cute. I guess she never seen our Lieutenant. She said she just couldnt resist them. I says, quick without thinkin it up "Of course, its against the law to resist an officer." That got them all laffin an they forgot Joe for a little while.

Both the daughters sang a duette. Joe says that was the best thing about it. They got through twice as quick. We got laffin so hard that I says I guess wed have to go sos to be in time for mess. Then Joe got awful polite and backed over a rubber plant an says "My gawd excuse me." He wont never be ast again.

Ive been wonderin for a long time, Mable, why the audience officers all wear spurs. They dont ever ride a horse of course. I ast Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, the other day and



"THEY GAVE US COFFEE IN EGG CUPS"

he says its to keep there feet from slidin off the desk. Aint that a funny custom?

I guess were goin to begin shootin again pretty soon. The Lieutenant says the artillery is goin to have a Brigade problem and the infantry is comin up from camp for it. I guess well all take a lot more interest in the shootin if theres somethin worth while to fire at

yours in spite of better things

Bill.

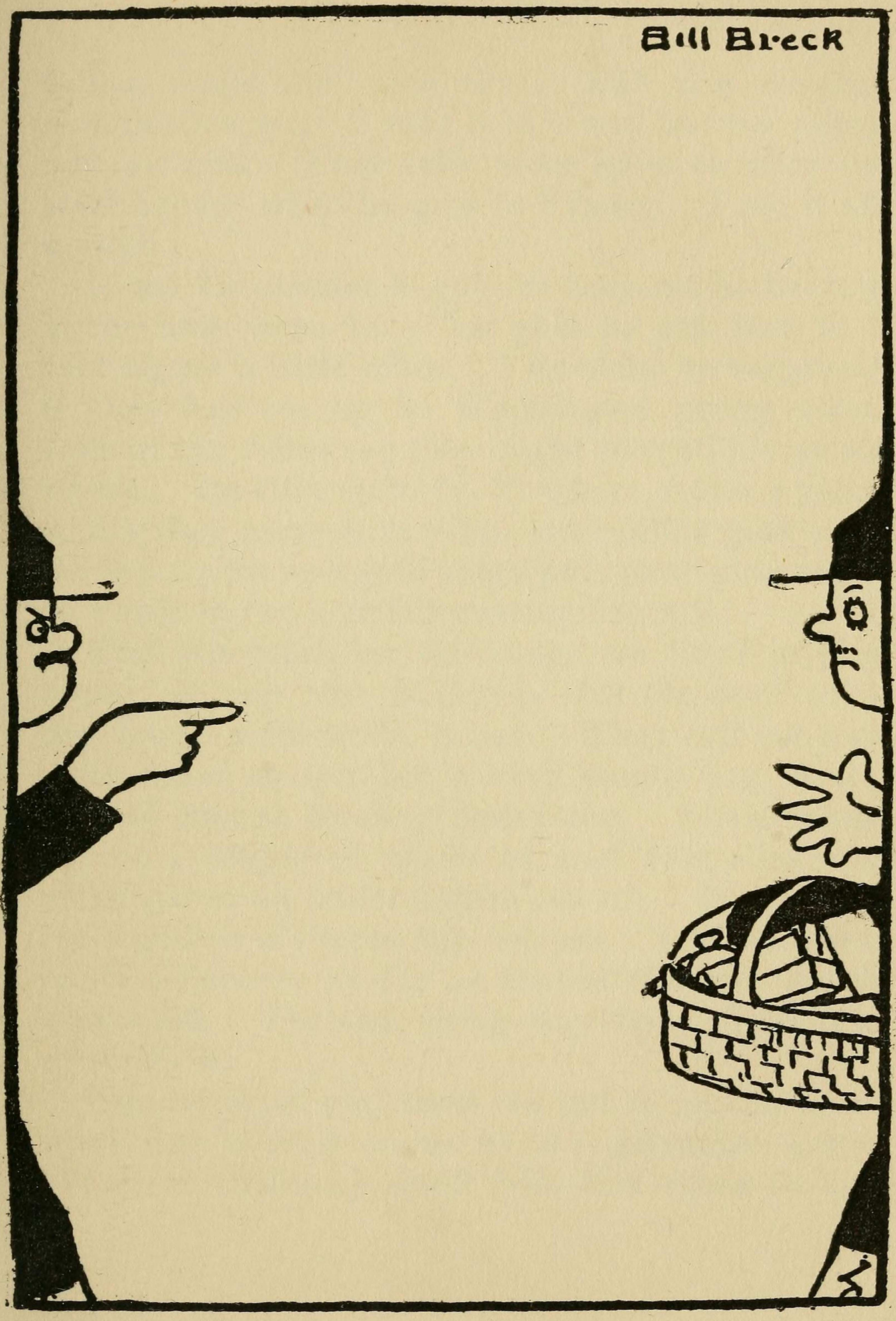
P.S. Joe Loomis just got a letter that smelt and what do you suppose, Mable? It was from the goodlookin daughter askin him to come over to dinner next Sunday all alone. I guess there not as high brow as I thought.

Dere Mable:

Were back from shootin at the range. We ended up by firin at the infantry. That was what they was talkin about when they said there was goin to be a garage fire. Thats the army all over, Mable. Tecknickle. The firin was a total failure, Mable. We fired at the range for three months an never hit it. That aint surprisin cause I never see nothin except some trees in front of the guns and we always fired over those. When they finally got wise and put some infantry out there for us to fire at we missed them absolutely. Fired everythin in front of them.

Dont say nothin about this cause it might get into the papers and cheer up the Kizer. Its all the Captins falt. I guess he thought he had an Aunty Air Kraft battery. That fello comes from Far Rockaway and he lives in the last house.

The last mornin we fired the Lieutenant says I was battery agent. It seemed kind of silly to me to bother about sellin stuff while we was firin but thats the Lieutenant. He got away before I could ask him what I was to sell. I bought a lot of pop and crackers and stuff and tried to sell em to the



"THE FIRST SARGENT WOULDNT LET ME"

fellos, while they was firin. The first sargent wouldnt let me. I told him I was battery agent but not him. That fello wont have to wear no steel helmut when he gets to France. I ate it all myself.

If the Lieutenant is goin to keep me as battery agent now were back Im goin to ask him if I cant rig up a little office. I wouldnt be surprised if they had me up in Washington pretty soon. Lots of the fellos say they ought to send me somewhere. Im ritin up to N. Y. where theres a place where they make sofa pillos with fellos goin over the top on em and gold rings with your girls name on em free for a dollar twenty ($1.20).

The last week on the range we lived in pup tents. A pup tent Mable is like the roof of a dog house without the house. They call em pup tents cause no one but a very young dog would be fool enough to sleep under one. There made out of a couple of pieces of stuff like what you make porus nit underclothes out of. You button em together if theres any buttons. It dont make much difference as far as keepin the rain out is concerned. The only thing they do to the rain is to strain it.

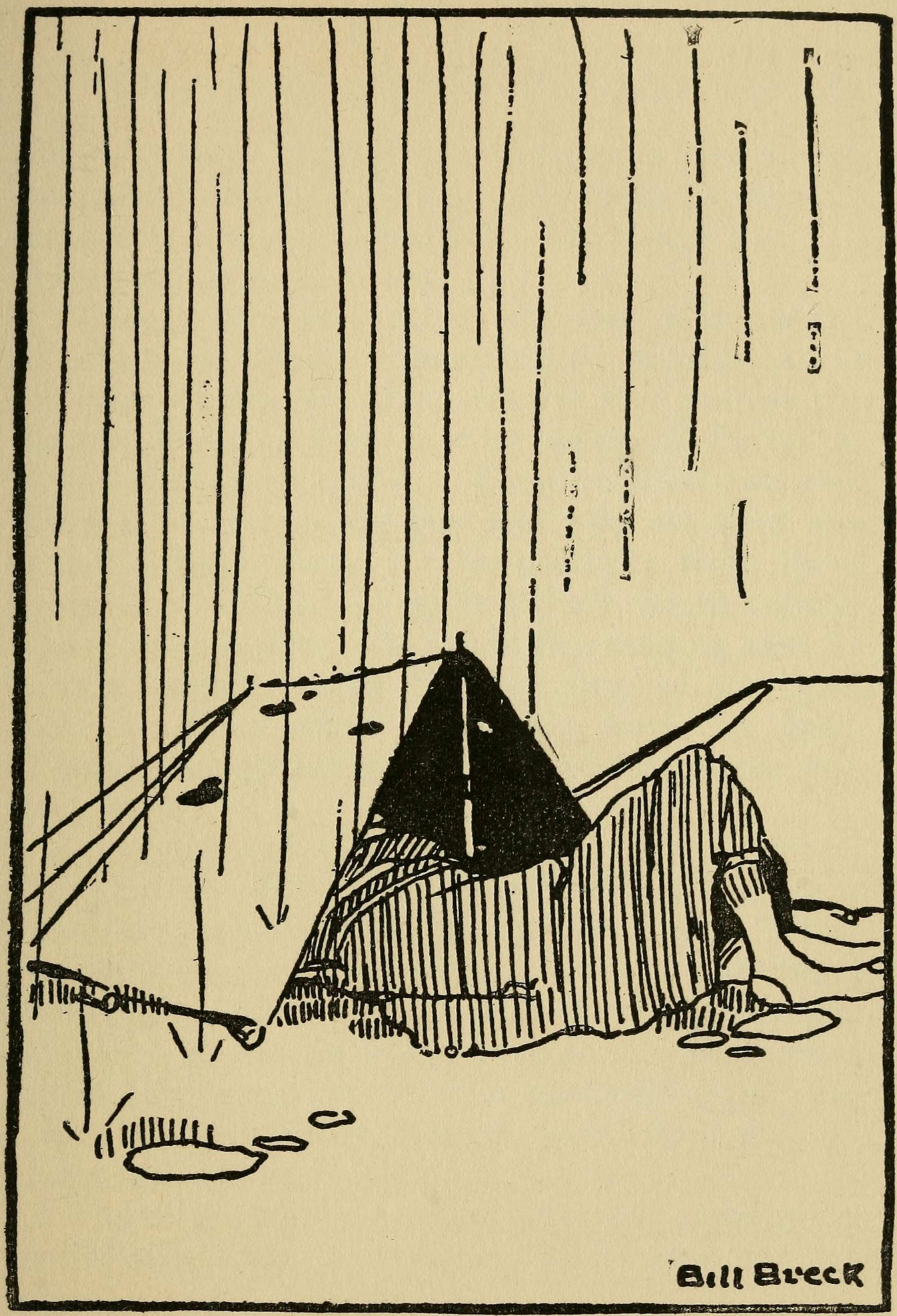
I guess these pup tents we got is an old issue what was wished on us by the Japaneze army. When an ordinary sized fello lies down in one

(and thats all you can do in em) hes out doors from the nees down. The Major came round Sunday night. I guess he made a mistake and thought it was Saturday. Theres a rule that Majors only come round on Saturday cause they bother the men. The Major says "I guess well blow taps an hour early tonight cause the men is all in." An I says back right out loud "There aint anybody goin to get all in these things, you big overgrown boob," only he happened to be away down the street and didnt hear me. It didnt make no difference to me though. I said it anyway. High spirited. Thats me all over, Mable.

Angos MacKenzie, the skotch fello, says that these is skotch pup tents. The skotch he says dont ever wear nothin below the nees. I guess Angus aint a pure skot though cause I heard him and Joe Loomis arguin this mornin cause Angus had swiped Joes horse blanket to wrap round his legs.

It rained for three days before we left. You could have squoze water out of my pistol, Mable. They say a fello is two thirds water anyway. I bet I was 99 and ninety nine 100 per cent pure, eh Mable?

Monday mornin we hiked back to camp. They got us up so early I thought they was blowin taps. The Lieutenant was awful sore. I guess a drop



"THE ONLY THING THEY DO TO THE RAIN IS TO STRAIN IT"

of water came through his tent somewhere during the night and lit on him. He looks at me and says "As you were, Smith." All I says was "Ill never be again, Lieutenant."

They made me a driver the last minit on the hike comin home. I guess there breakin me in to every place sos they can let the rest of the battery home on furlo and let me do all the work, from the looks of it. They showed me two horses hitched to the gun and told me they was mine. Right away I seen that the right hand horse was all hitched up and there wasnt nobody there to ride him. So when the sargent says he was all ready I says "No we aint. I aint goin till the fello what rides this horse is here. Theres enough favorites being played in the battery now."

That showed the Lieutenant where I stood. He said the fello what usually drove the horse was on speshul duty coilin up firin lines. When he put it that way I agreed to lead the right hand horse in to camp. Angus says they call the right hand horse the off horse because the fello what rides him is always off doin somethin else. He aint the only fello whats off round here though. I can tell you that, Mable.

Theres a roomor around here that were going to Honey Lulu. Joe Loomis has sent for his

Ukaylaly. Angus says hes orderin a grass cutter to take with him sos he can make hisself one of those grass suits over there. I guess the next time I rite it will be from there.

yours till then

Bill.

Dere Mable:

I guess I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth though up to now I thought Id swallowed it. I told you Id make you happy some day. Now Im going to. Im comin home on a furlo.

I always wished theyd kristened me somethin besides Smith till now. Theres a fello named Patrick Smith what lives two tents down with a red nose and hair that hangs down under his hat. His mother rote the Captin an said she was dyin. She said she didnt expect to live more than forty-eight (48) hours or however long it took for her son to get home.

The Captin thought it was me. He called me up an says "Smith your mother is sinkin rapidly." I couldnt believe that though cause she woudnt never go near any place where they was water. Then he read me the letter. I knew right away it was Patrick Smith's mother cause he was figurin last week on the most likely one to kill off sos he could get home.

I never let on though. Quick. Thats me all over, Mable. I says "Gee, thats to bad" like I was all broke up. And then I said "Shes the

only mother I ever had Captin." I said it so sad that I almost got myself cryin. An the Captin says "Well Smith, you been workin pretty hard an need a change. Ill give you a ten day furlo to go home to the funeral." Nice fello the Captin when you get to know him.

Im comin up Mable just as soon as I can borrow enough close and the like. It seemed to me when I used to lay out my stuff for inspeckshun Saturday mornins that I had enough junk to equip the draft army. I just been lookin over my stuff to find somethin to wear home. It makes a fello feel half nakid.

Im going to borrow the money to buy my railroad ticket so you see the trip aint going to cost me a cent. I bet youll be glad to have someone round who aint skared to change a quarter once in a while.

Its kind of hard to get a suitcase. Theres only one in the battery. The fello what owns it says its made the trip north 25 times. From the looks of it hes modest. Else the last fello tied it to the end of the train and let it drag all the way. I guess I can fix it with rope though.

Then Joe Loomis has a uniform that he paid fifteen dollars ($15) for. It looks like an officers unless you wear it in the rain. Joes in the guard house so Im going to take it an not say

nothin. I guess Joe'd do the same for a pal. Besides he aint got no kick comin cause theres a rule that we cant speak to prisoners.

Joe got put in the guard house for burnin down the stable tent where they keep the horses serial. He was sittin in the stable tent while he was on stable guard catchin a smoke. Stable guard is a kind of night bell hop and chamber maid to the horses. He heard the Officer of the Day comin and stuck his cigaret but in an oat bag. Then the whole thing burnt down. Angus MacKenzie says thats what he gets for hidin his light under a bushel Thats a skotch joke though. I guess you wouldnt get it.

Angus is lendin me a pair of spiral puttys. A spiral putty is a flannel bandage what you wind round your leg sos nobody cant see that the buttons is offen your trouser legs. The fello what made em must have had queer legs cause when you get to the top there aint no place to fasten them. I guess they were built for fellos that was goin to stand still. As soon as you move they unwind and drag in the dust till a horse steps on one of them. Then you do em up again.

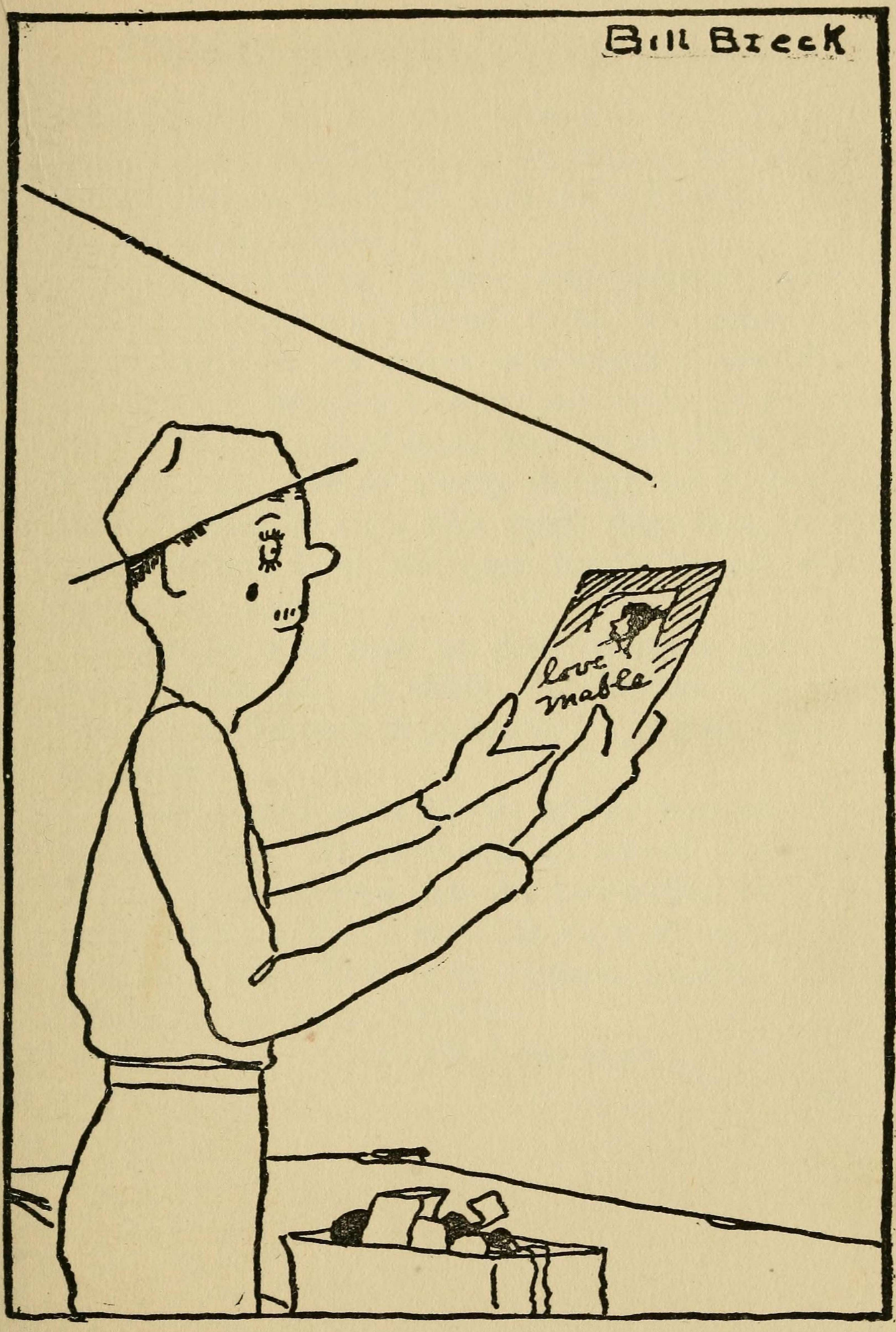
I started savin thrift stamps. I got pretty near two books full. Angus says its got it all over United Segar cupons. When you get enough you get some dandy things. I wrote the premium de-

partment at Wash. D. C. for one of their catalogs. I want to get a mandolin as soon as I get enough. Joe Loomis is savin for a Ukaylaly. I hope it takes more stamps than he can ever save.

Were getting some new draft men now. Between you an me there an awful dum bunch. They dont know the difference between squads right and fall in. I dont see how fellos can live as long as they have an not know these simple things.

A few of them is Jewish fellos from New York. All they think about is how they can get some post cards of the camp and sell em to the fellos. A couple of them sold there equipment the minit they was issued it. Angus says one of them was on guard the other night and a fello came a long. He stopped him and says "Halt, whose there?" an the fellow says "Friend." An he says "Advance, friend, an give the discount." Youd hardly believe that, Mable. But bein a girl I suppose you would, not knowin nothin about the military.

So I aint goin to rite you no more cause theres no sense ridin up on the train with my own letters. I got a lower bunk all hired. Im goin to have it made up before we leave the station an I aint goin to get up till we pull into Philopolis. If the fello in the upper bunk aint got sense enough to stay in bed he can sit on the edge of the bunk and



"I JUST FOUND YOUR PICTUR AT THE BOTTOM OF MY BARRACK BAG"

whissle for all I care. An the lord help the porter if he calls me cause he aint no first sargent an Id just as soon tell him so. Frank. Thats me all over, Mable.

I suppose your father and mother will be tickled to see me. Theyll think Im comin home to marry you. I guess you know I would if I had time. Besides I dont believe in gettin married before the war cause like as not Ill be killed. I dont want you to worry though or nothin like that. Youd be in a nice mess then though with your fathers liver on your hands an no visibul means of support.

I got to stop now an borrow some money to come home on. I think Pat Smiths got some. Hed be awful sore if he knew I was goin home on his furlo.

I just found your pictur at the bottom of my barrack bag. It gave me an awful shock first. Then I remembered that my hob-nailed shoes had been sittin on it. I wouldnt care though even if you did look like that. Sense before beauty. Thats me all over, Mable.

yours till I see you

Bill.

Dere Mable:

This is the last time Ill take my pen in hand to rite for some time. I aint allowed to tell you why.

This letters got to be awful short cause I aint allowed to say nothin. Theres so many spize round listenin that I aint even allowed to tell you that we got our orders an were goin to F——e. Were goin to fight the G————s.

I aint even allowed to tell you how were goin except that its by boat. Even thats awful confidenshul. If the spize heard about it theyd probably blow up all the boats sos to make sure of gettin the right one.

Angus says the top sargents got orders to take us right into the front line trenches. I guess there goin to try an finish this thing up right away. I guess Ill probably get killed pretty quick. Ill feel a lot better if I know your not worryin an thinkin of me lyin mortaly wounded in a shell hole as I probably shall be.

An so now I cant come home on my furlo, Mable. I knew the Captin had a string tied to it somewhere. If theres any way of gettin into

heaven that fello will slip through or Im mistaken. Of course I wanted to see you but on the other hand I saved a lot of money. Just as soon as I get mortally wounded Im going to rite a book about my sensashuns an then come back an lecture about it. I guess I wont be gone long.

Well, Mable, there finally wakin up to themselves. I guess the war wont last much longer now. Or me either, eh Mable? Some day when one of those big G————n shells lands on my napsack Ill be able to really rite you an say "Thats me all over, Mable." Please dont worry about me.

Yours till you here the worst

Bill.

Dere Mable:

I take up my pen to rite you. From the way I feel I dont think Ill be takin things up much longer. Im on a boat now. They say we are goin to France but we been goin two days now and I aint seen no land yet. Joe Loomis thinks that theres German proper gander in it. He says that they got us out here and there goin to keep us goin round and round till the wars over.

It seems kind of silly to rite you cause I cant mail this till I get to France. It wont be no use then cause by the looks of things now Ill probably be flirting with a couple of mermaids in Davy Jones Lock Up long before that. Thats a naughty call joke though, Mable. You wouldnt understand it.

As far as I can find out there sending the whole army over on this ship. Most of them sleeps in the room with me from the noise. They got it fixed up cozy like an opium den or a morgue. There piled up three high and the only thing that stops them there is the roof.

Were on a German boat. I bet it makes them sore Mable to see one of there own boats bringin

over fellos like me. The Germans is peculiar people. They got sines all over the boat. On some of the doors upstairs they got Herren painted. Youd never catch an American boat carryin fish right on the passenger floor. On some of the other doors they got sines what says Bad. I guess they run out of these before they came to the place where I sleep. It dont seem reasonable to let fish have a room with mahogohuny doors and a fello with two legs sleepin where I do. Some of the rooms has Damen rote on them. Joe Loomis what lives on the canvas above me says thats the only German he ever agreed with.

I aint been really sick yet. I aint give up hopes though. Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, got so worried because he felt all right that he went up to see the doctor this mornin.

I cant rite much cause the Captin told us the centsor would read our letters. I dont know who he is. I guess hes a German. Of course hell read em if we dont seal em.

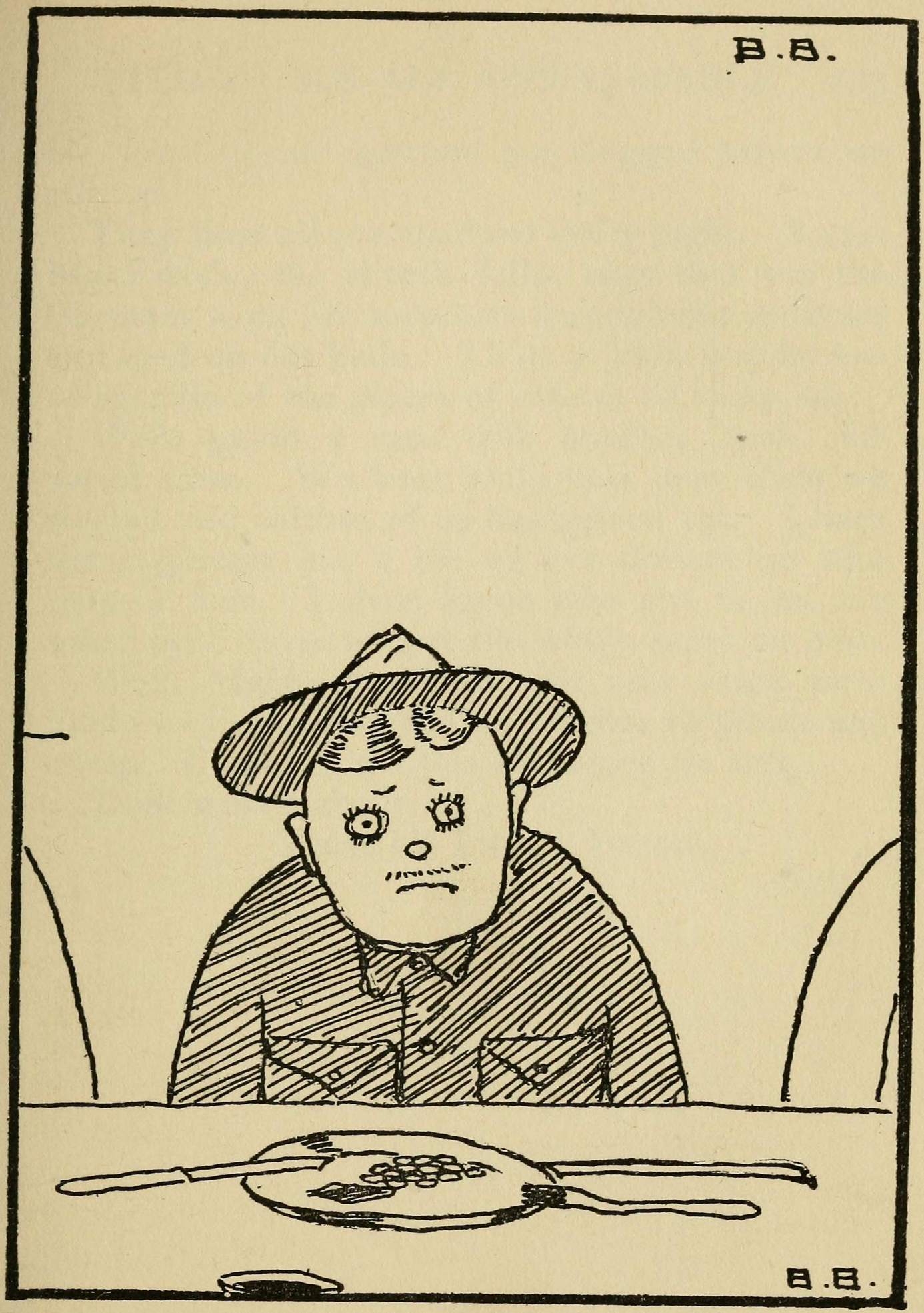
I guess well get blown up before we go much further. I dont want you to worry though. I just menshun it. You got enough on your hands with your father in bed with his liver again and me not around to cheer you up.

Yours to the last bubble *Bill.*

Dere Mable:

Were all balled up. There aint no doubt now that its German Proper Gander workin. We been runnin three days now and no sign of land yet. I wouldnt be surprised if we woke up some mornin in Chickawgo or some other place on the Specific coast. I aint sick yet. I dont seem to need as much food as I used to, though.

Im gettin on to this naughty call stuff fast. Quick. Thats me all over, Mable. Theres a few things about the boat though that I dont know yet. For instance they got pipes comin out of the deck all over like Sibly stoves upside down. I thought they was for rubbish. I was just remarkin to Joe Loomis how neat they was to have such things. We was makin a point of pickin up everything we saw and firin it down them. Then one of the ships officers came along and you'd ought to have herd him. Youd have thought we was tryin to blow up the old tug, instead of keepin it clean for him. He said the funnels was for carryin fresh air to the mens quarters. I says I guessed the one that carried



"I DONT SEEM TO NEED AS MUCH FOOD AS I USED TO"

air down to our quarters got clogged before we started.

They close all the windows every night. Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, says that sos the Germans wont fire torpetoes through the windows and land on our beds. Thats a jokin way he has of speakin of the pieces of canvas we sleep on.

Were havin a race with another boat. Its awful close. We been racin now ever since we started and neither of us has gained yet. I here the engineers has a bet of five dollars on who gets in first. I dont know who can be on the other boat cause we got the whole army on ours.

Well, Mable, I got to quit now cause were liable to be sub-marined and blown to pieces any minit. I want to get this off before we sink.

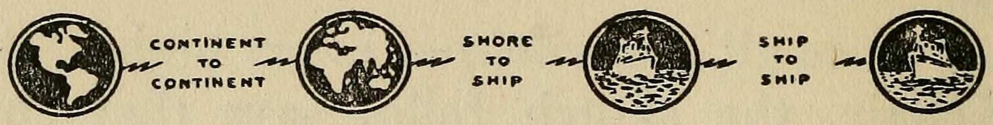
Dont worry about me.

Yours till I touch bottom

Bill.

MARCONIGRAM

WORLD WIDE WIRELESS



MARCONI TELEGRAPH – CABLE CO Inc.
IN CONNECTION WITH
MARCONI WIRELESS TELEGRAPH COMPANY
OF AMERICA

Received at Philopolis

Dere Mable

Not feelin well today so am sendin this instead of ritin. Aint seasick. Just somethin the matter with my stummick. Angus MacKenzie, skotch fello says thats me all over, Mable. I says its all over with me. Bright and funny to the last. Eh, Mable. Guess we'll all be sunk soon now. Itll be a change to have somethin goin down. I cant say any more cause this is costin me 1 dollar ($1) a word. Wouldnt have said this much but I borrowed the money from Joe Loomis. Hed have spent it for somethin foolish anyhow.

Yours through all ups and downs

Bill

Dere Mable:

No land yet. If wed been goin in a straight line wed have passed N. Y. twice by this time, I suppose theyll keep us goin round in circles like this till the wars over. Joe Loomis says its three thousand (3000) miles across. Thats silly though. It aint as far as that from N. Y. to Chickawgo.

My room is way down stairs in the sub cellar. All there is between me and the bottom of the sea is the floor. If theyd stuck me down any further it wouldnt have been such a long drop at that. Each fello has a little blue padded straight jacket to wear while hes sinkin. There awful heavy. I guess there to keep us warm while were drownin. Joe Loomis says there to pull us down quick sos we dont suffer. The Captin says today that when we sink all men gets into rowboats and the officers hang on to rafts. Theres somethin wrong somewhere. I been lookin over the rowboats to see whats the matter with them.

They got a lot of skotch fellos on board. I dont know where they came from. Joe Loomis says they aint pure cause they dont wear ribbons

on their bonnets and do wear pants. But he aint got no call to talk about pure skots.

We all got issued tin hats before we left. I guess theyll give us sheet iron underclose next. It takes a long time to wear a tin hat without hurtin yourself. If you move quick it slides down over your eyes and bursts you in the nose. Thats why they charge in a walk I guess. They got muskito nettin inside sos it wont hurt your head. If you take that out it makes a good wash basin or a mess kit. Joe Loomis and Angus got arguin yesterday, Joe claimin that they was no good and Angus claimin that you couldnt hurt a guy what had one on. Angus got so sore he bet a quarter. To decide it Joe put on his hat and let Angus hit him on the bean with a piece of lead pipe. Joe always was lucky. He won the quarter and now hes livin on A deck where the hospital is. An the Dr. says he aint got a chance of dyin which is more than most of us can say. I guess theyll sink us today. I got to quit now.

Yours till the third time down,

Bill.

Dere Mable:

Were in the same place we was yesterday. Id know it now with my eyes shut. It looks like we was movin but Joe Loomis says thats just the water goin past the boats. A fello told me we was in the Gulf stream. If we are its some creek cause you cant see no banks.

We been on four days now. Im beginnin to feel like the Ainshunt Mourner. We lie round on the floor of one of the lower piazzas all day and read books from the library. Most of them is about the lives of fellos whats dead. That aint right for a bunch what expects to be with em any minit.

Once a day we go up on one of the upper piazzas to exercise. A fello might as well try to swing indiun clubs on the five o'clock subway. The only exercise you can do without knockin off the head of the fello next to you is eyes right and eyes left.

The Captin is always talkin about goin below. Seein how we all may any minit, it aint no time for jokin about it. He says to me yesterday "Smith, fix me up a list of spaces for all my men down

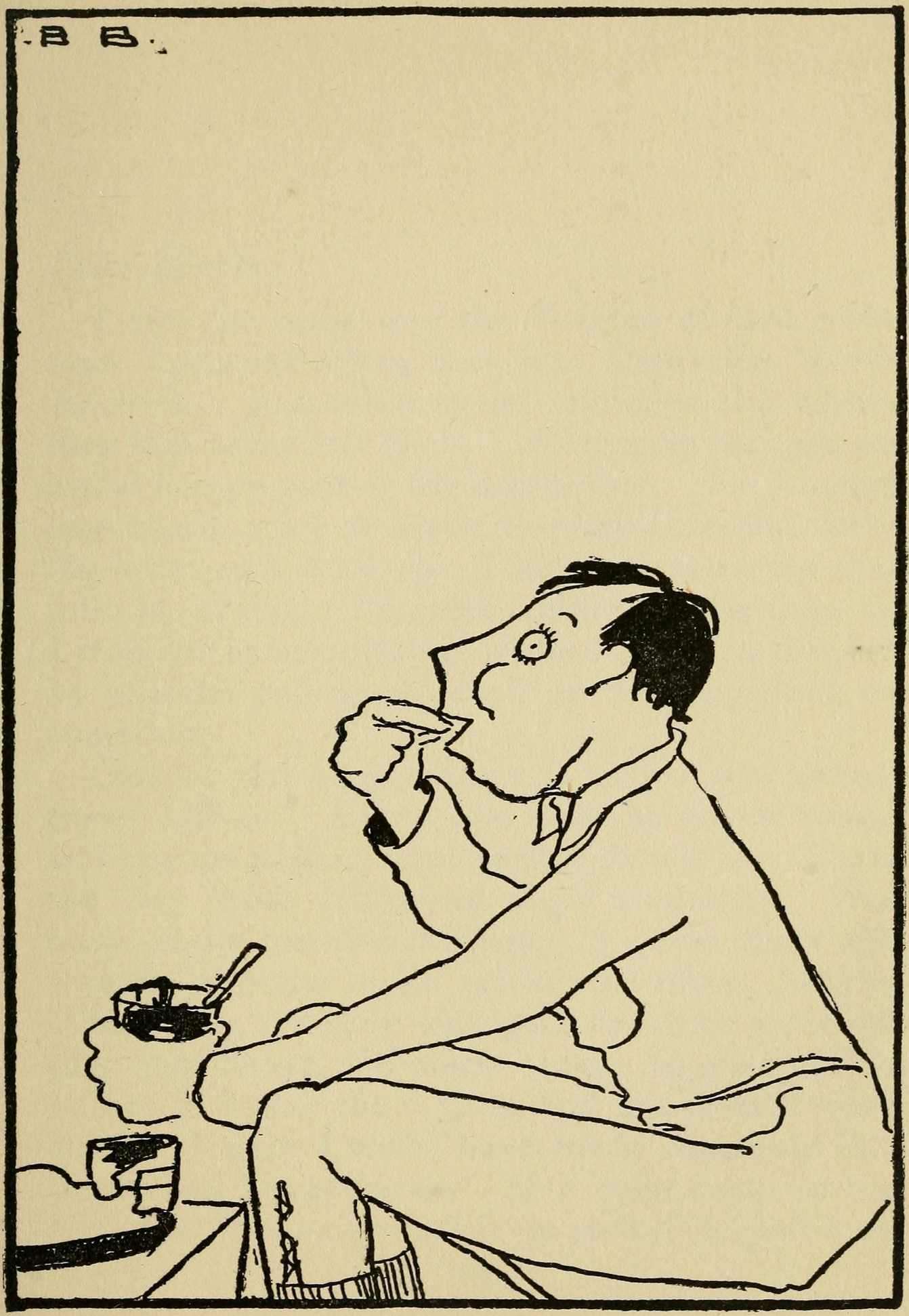
below." Aint that the Captin all over, Mable? He wont be satisfied till he has em all tagged and numbered and doing squads east and west in Davy Jones Lock Up.

Joe Loomis has his girls pictur pasted on the back of his tin lookin glass. He lies on his bunk all day gapin at it. Some fellos make awful asses of themselves about there girls. Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, had the mirror shavin the other day. It swung round while he wasnt lookin and when he looked in it again he got an awful start.

They havnt sunk us yet. I guess there just foolin with us. Perhaps it will happen today. Dont worry though.

Yours till you here otherwise

Bill.



"JOE LOOMIS"

Dere Mable:

I feel the same way the Knights of Columbus must have felt when they was discoverin North America. Just sailin round in circles and wishin they had never left N. Y. Were goin through an awful bumpy part of the ocean now. Joe Loomis says theres a lot of traffic through here and these big boats cuts it all up. Thats how ignorant that fello is, Mable. Its gettin colder all the time to. I wouldnt be surprised if we had got turned north by mistake and would land up in Labordoor or somethin.

One of the boat officers is called the Executioner Officer. Every day most he comes round and says its half an hour earlier than it is. Thats the way those fellos use there awthority. Nobody dasnt contradict them. I guess thats the way these boats make records so often, Mable. When they see they aint goin to make a record they just shove the clock back. Id go over in nothin if I was the Captin and get it over with quick. I wish I could have made contracks like that when I was home. If a fello came to me and says "Your contrack is up today" Id just look

at him and say "You must be mistaken. This is yesterday." Joe Loomis has it figured out that if we keep on losing time well get there last winter.

Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, says theres no danger in that though, cause if they ever find themselves workin back towards last pay day theyll go ahead for a while.

Angus says that every time they set us back half an hour the government skins every man out of pretty near a nickul. It aint the money, Mable. A nickul never meant nothin to me one way or the other as you ought to know better than any one. Isnt it a cheap way to Whoverize though?

Joe says that if it keeps on bein as cold as this he aint goin to get off when they sink us. He says he rather stay down in the bedrooms and be drowned than get all wet with that ice water and then have a cold for the rest of the war.

Well, Mable, I got to quit now. A fighter needs a lot of sleep.

Yours till the war ends

Bill.

Dere Mable:

Somebodys rockin the boat. Its been rollin round somethin awful all mornin. Theres always some fool like that in every crowd. I aint said nothin but me and Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, is watchin. When we catch him you bet well give him whats what.

While we was snoopin round we just discovered somethin awful. All the life rafts what the officers ride on when we sink is full of holes. The water would come right through. As soon as we find the fello whats rockin the boat were goin to tell the Captin. Angus says perhaps hell make us officers or let us sleep late or somethin. A fello told me they threw these rafts over the side when the ship was sinkin. As far as I can see if a fello is lucky enough to get off the old tub they fling one of these on his bean. Im going to wear my tin hat you bet.

They got a bunch of ropes hangin with knots on them along the sides from the top floor down to the water. A fello told me they was to climb down when all the rowboats was gone. Some fellos is in an awful hurry to get drowned. If

there bound to crown me with a seaweed wreath Im goin to keep em waitin as long as I can. The fello what hung em must have had arms like a munkey cause there hangin about six feet from the side.

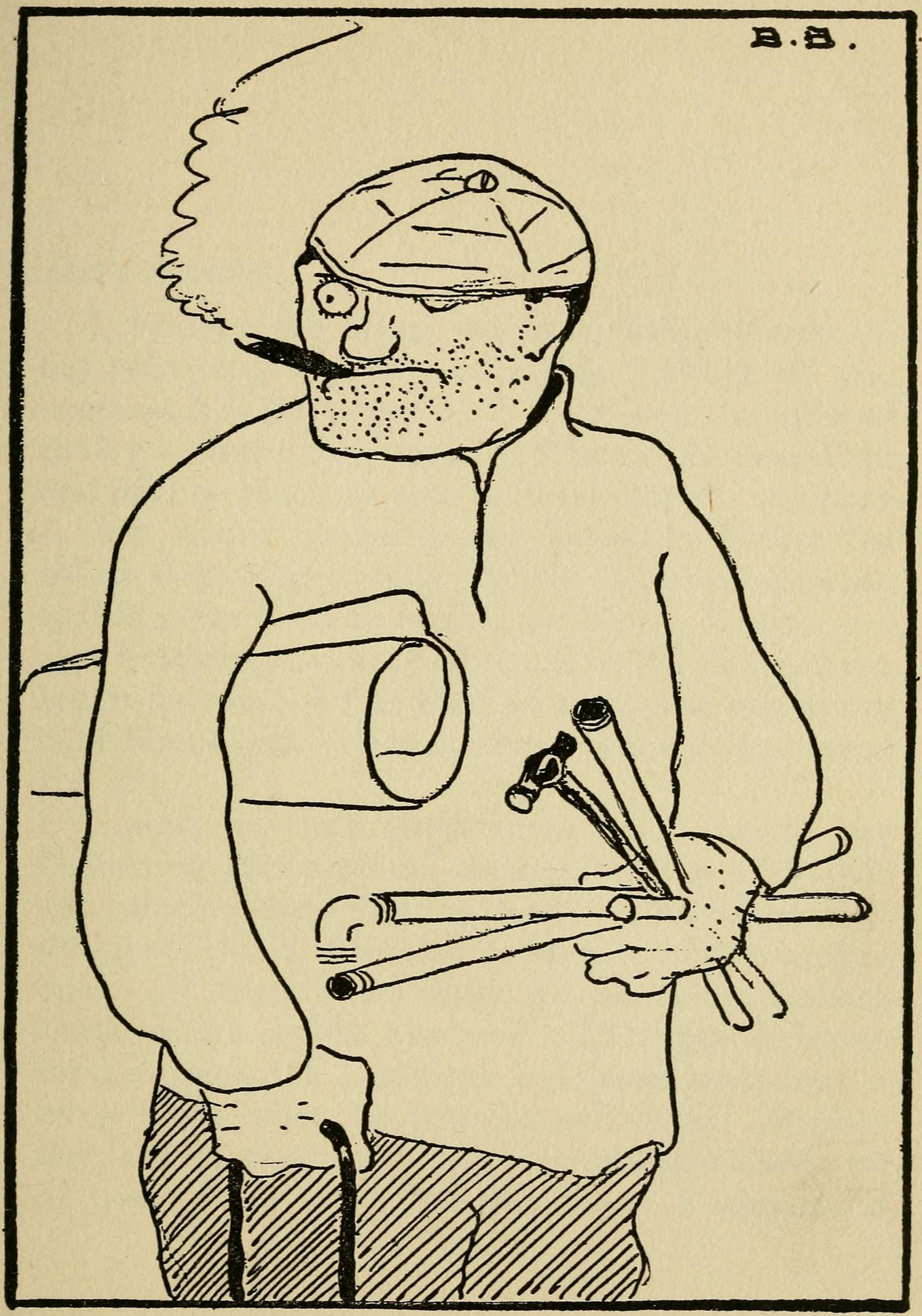
These Germans must have been awful tanks, Mable. They got one whole floor they call saloon deck. Of course the saloons is gone now. When they made the ship over they had to get rid of all the luxuries to make room. They got the bars out of the saloons and the officers eat there.

A fello came down stairs the other night and told us about the war. He said we was all comin over to fight to make the world safe for the Democrats. If thats the case Mable your father must be an ailin enemy.

Well, Mable, they tell us that if we aint sunk pretty soon were goin to get there. I guess then I wont be able to rite you for a few days cause itll take me a little while to get settled in the trenches and get my dug out fixed up nice. I hope they give us a part of the line near the station cause I dont like those troop trains.

Yours till I write again

Bill.



"THE TAILOR MUST HAVE BEEN A BOILER MAKER ONCE"

Dere Mable:

I thought the fishes would be buildin nests in my ears long before I rote this. What do you suppose has happened? I wont ever be able to look you in the face again. Were right near land and aint so much as seen a Perryskope. An here I been runnin round in my Drownin Jacket for seven days like a fello wearin his shroud down to his office a week before he dies. I hope you aint bragged too much about it or theyll have the laugh on you. I feel kind of cheap but you really cant blame me. I took these other fellos word for it.

I aint the only goat thats been wearin my Drowning Jacket round though. They all had to and most of them slept in them. The tailor what designed these must have been a boiler maker once. If there vests there too short an if there coats where is the sleeves? They got a hump runnin down the backbone. I know now how a horse feels when he tries to roll over. Besides the Jackets, they made us carry round a tin bottle of water on a string all the time. I suppose if

there was not enough water to drown us all we could empty out these.

Were just a few miles off shore, but I cant tell you just where. This is partly because I dont know. Joe Loomis says were comin into London, but Angus MacKenzie, the skotch fello, says it aint London. He thinks its Paris. I dont think so though cause if it was youd see the Ethel Tower.

You want to be careful when you address letters to me. If you address me too plain there liable to get to me and you cant tell who might be lookin. About all you can say on the address as far as I can find out is Bill Smith, A. E. F., which means Am Expecting Flowers.

I got to quit now cause were gettin near shore and the Sanitary Officer ast me to help him sweep out the boat when the other fellos is gone. Of course I said I would. Obligin. Thats me all over, Mable. As soon as I get ashore Im going to buy one of them John Brown belts you here so much about. I dont know when Ill be able to write to you again cause I understand theres a battle on now so I guess Ill be pretty busy for some time to come.

Yours till I rite again,

Bill.

"SAME OLD BILL, EH MABLE!"

PREFACE

The rightful place for a preface is at the end of a book or, better still, the scrap basket. My only reason for setting it here is lest someone read and, misunderstanding, take offense.

Not for one moment has there been any thought of making light of that splendid, almost foolhardy, bravery which has characterized the American soldier. It was he himself who made light of it, as he did of the whole war, and probably would of doomsday.

Nor is there anything unkind or deprecating in his attitude toward the Frenchman. He met a race so distinct from his in ideals and customs that there was no basis for understanding. Failing to understand, he followed his usual rule in such instances and laughed.

One of those veterans of a dozen battles, chancing to glance over these pages, may say that the dangers and horrors of those last five months have been underrated. They, however, belong to a comparatively small and enviable minority. Those who turned the tide in July, 1918, and who knocked the line at St. Mihiel into its proper place in September, also bore the brunt on

the Meuse and the dreary mud-spattered monotony of the Army of Occupation. The great mass of the American army saw but a few brief weeks of fighting during October and November. Thousands of other Bills, equally brave and more eager because it was denied them, never heard the sound of guns except on the target range.

This is not a treatise on International Relations. It is not a chronology of battles. It is not a memorial of brave deeds. It is merely a few impressions of Pvt. William Smith, Buck, placed in a situation so new, so incomparable, that it had wiser men than he guessing. He was one of those who left their reasons for being "there" to be analyzed by men not so occupied in the business of keeping alive. He would have been bored to death if you had tried to explain them to him anyway. His loyalty and patriotism were so unquestioned that its discussion was absurd. Sentimental, yet so sensitive to obvious sentimentality that he died many times making fun of the things that he was dying for.

"Same Old Bill, Eh Mable!"

Dere Mable:

Were in sunny France at last. I cant tell you much about it yet on account of its havin been so foggy since we got here. We didnt deboat in Paris as I was expectin. We sailed up a river to a town with a wall around it and got off there. I dont know what the wall was for unless to keep people in. They certinly wouldnt need one to keep anybody out of that place. Were now in what they call a rest camp. If this is restin then all they say about war is true.

For the last two days weve been unpackin boats. You havnt any idear how refreshin it is to pile up about 5 milyon cases of corn Willie. Ive been puttin on weight ever since I got here but its all been on my back.

Some of the fellos think they got us mixed up with one of these Steva Dora regiments. It dont seem to worry the Captin much. Theres no reason it should tho. All he has to do is to sit on a

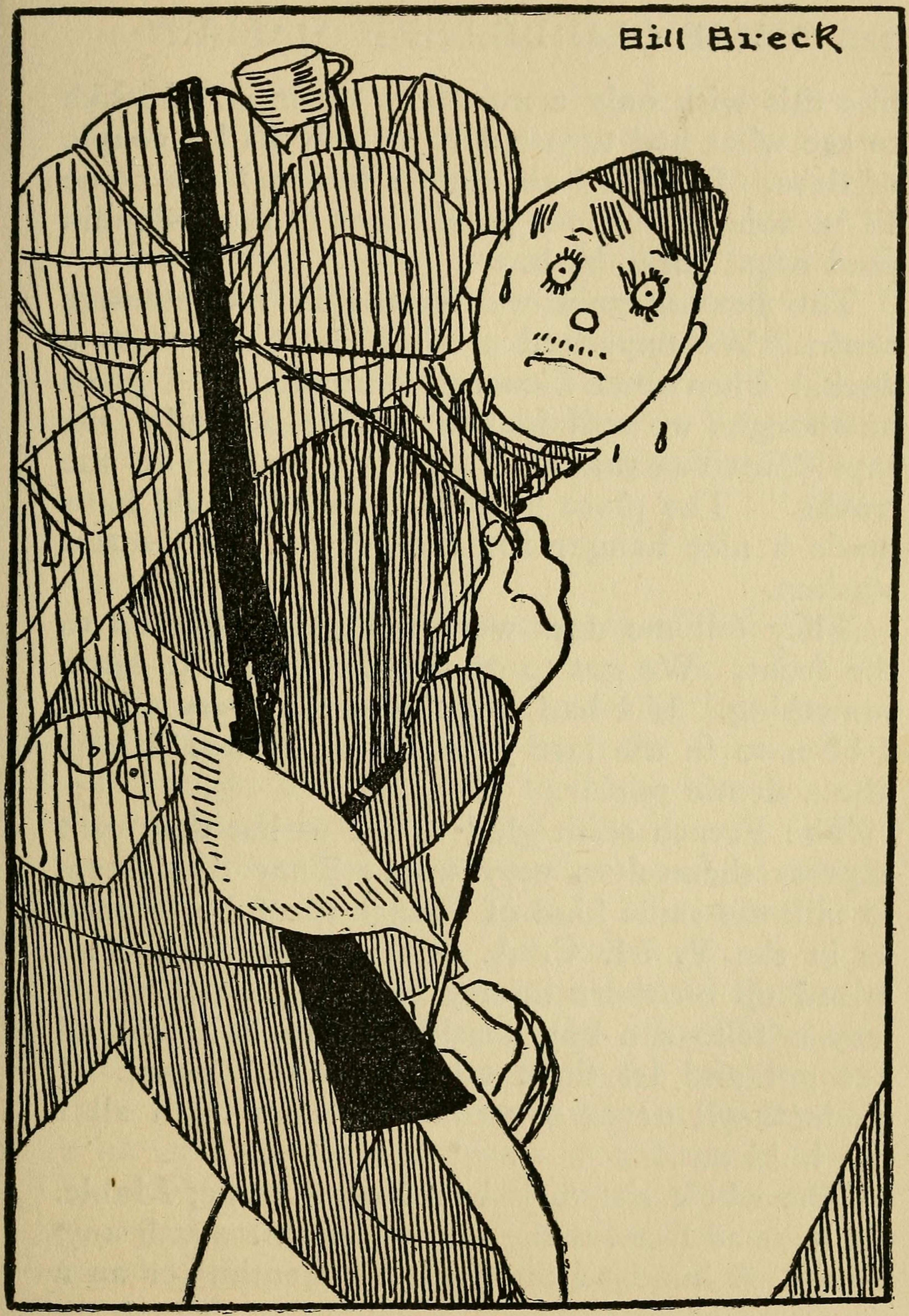
box an keep the quartermaster from gettin overstocked on cigars.

The day we got in they tied us out in the middle of the river. They left us there so long that there was a roomer the war was over an we was goin to turn around an go home. When it comes to takin that trip right over agen I say on with the war.

We lay around there so long I was beginnin to feel like the keeper of a light ship. Then they got into an awful hurry all of a sudden an piled pretty near the whole boat load onto one coal barge. Our Bilitin oficer met us at the dock. Hed been over here a month gettin things fixed up for us. From the way he acted youd think he was the fello that invented the war.

After that we got out in the country and marched till my pack gained a hundred an fifty pounds an my tung was lyin on my chest. Joe said we needed a rest camp after a hike like that. When wed walked about six miles, or killen meters as they call them over here, we turned into a bare field. The Bilitin oficer said that was the camp.

Just then it started to rain. The Captin told the Top to make us all comfortable. Then he remembered some business in town and went away before he had a chance to hear any first impreshuns about rest camps. The Bilitin oficer must have wore himself out findin us a nice place



"MARCHED TILL MY PACK GAINED A HUNDRED AN FIFTY POUNDS"

like this with only a month to do it in. Id like to see what hed turn out if he only had a couple of days. It rained all night. When I get home Ill be able to put in a good night in the swimmin pool of a Turks bath.

The next mornin we started in on intensive restin. We unpacked a whole boat out onto a dock. Then some General came along. I guess he thought we still looked a little peaked. He says "Just run that stuff into the shed across the tracks." The place he called a shed would have made a nice hanger for the New York Central stashun.

They tell me now were not goin right up to the front. We got to go to school agen to learn something. If I had a diploma for every school I been to in the last year my room would look like a dentle parlor.

The French seem glad to see us but they cant express themselves very well. They dont seem to talk the same kind of French the fello learned us in the Y. M. C. A. last winter. There all mixed up on there money too. About the only way a fello can buy anything is to hold out all hes got and let them take what they want. I guess theyll never overcharge me by takin all I can hold out.

The whole sistem is based on the Sue, Mable. As near as I can make out a Sue aint worth anything. A hundred Sues make a Centimeter an a

hundred Centimeters make a Frank. Five Franks make a dollar only now they dont. That gives you an idear how simple it is to go into a store an figger what you can buy with a quarter.

I hear the battery comin back so I guess Ill quit this and fall in on the tail of the colyum. It isnt that I wouldnt just as soon have them all know where Ive been, but it makes the Captin feel a lot better to have me there at formashuns.

Yours if I survive the rest

Bill

Dere Mable:

If you ever have to do any travelin in France, walk. I dont suppose you ever took a five day trip in an open trolly. We traveled five days an all the time straight away from the front. First we thought we was goin to Italy but we must have passed that long ago. They finally landed us in a little town with about a hundred people, fifty cows an no pictur show. The more I see of this country the more patriotic I get.

The train we came down on looked like one I had when I was a kid on tracks. You felt somebody ought to get out an wind the engine every time it stopped. Whenever we got to stashuns a lot of fellos in long coats would come out an blow whissels. Sometimes wed start but most of the time nothin happened. At last I found a job for the Top sargent when the war is over.

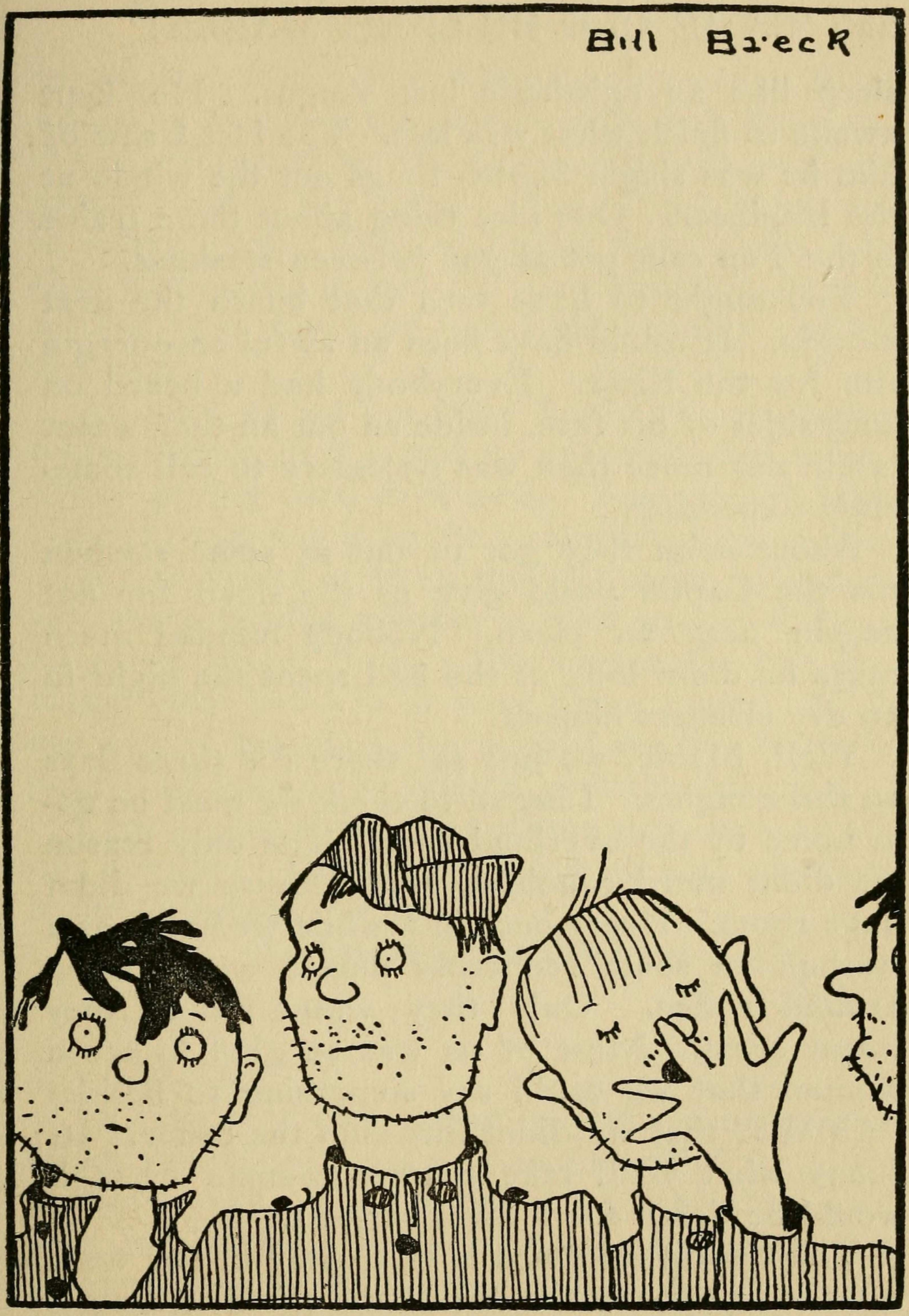
The cars are marked 1st, 2nd an 3rd class. The difference is that the wheels on the 1st class has only got one flat side. The 2nd class has got two, an the 3rd class wheels are square. We ride in the 3rd class. Luckily the cars has only got four wheels. There so short you couldnt get any more under them if you wanted to.

There freight cars are all Ford models to. On the doors they got painted "Hommes 40 Chevaux 8." Thats French for 40 men an 8 horses. That struck me as funny till I figgered out that they probably pack five men between each horse sos they wont rattle round so much.

Of course nobody could ever collect tickets on a train like this. So they got a saloon in every stashun insted of a ticket office. They make the road pay on those. The first time we stopped Angus got off an bought a bottle of Vinrooge wine. Thats a drink the French use. They must wash in it to cause I havnt seen any water since I been here.

Marv Motel, one of the new fellos in the battery, said if you could get two or three quarts of that under your belt it would act like a couple of bottles of beer an help you to sleep. So at the next stashun Angus got enuff for three quarts apiece.

The Vinrooge wine acted the way Marv said it would only he must have meant two cases of beer insted of two bottles. It put everybody to



"EVERYBODY HAD A BEARD ON BOTH SIDES OF HIS FACE"

sleep like an anisthetic but Angus. He kept awake to finish what was left. The last I saw of him he was singin Skotch songs out the windo at the Engineer. One nice thing about these trains is the Top cant get at you between stashuns.

You ought to have seen that bunch the next mornin. It would have been an awful encouragin site for the Kiser. Everybody had a beard on both sides of his face, inside an out an they wasnt talkin any more than was necessary to call somebody something.

About noon they got us out at some stashun sos the Captin could give us the devil for not keepin neat an clean. Nobody minded much cause he didnt look as tho hed spent the night in no dry cleaners himself.

Well, Mable, we just sat there for three days an three nights. I began to think we must be goin home by the overland root. The only reason we didnt murder nobody was because we didnt have room. Every once in a while wed stop at a stashun an some red cross nurses would bring around coffee. Only they wasnt red an they wasnt cross. Most of us was so glad to see a woman that we could say something to besides "Ah We" that we didnt menshun the coffee. Its funny what youll take from a woman when it would be death for a mess sargent.

The Captin said wed have to stay in this town a week or two on account of the school were go-

in to bein full. The Bilitin oficer came down ahead as usual. This time he only had two days. After seein what he could do in a month we didnt expect much. We got it. Ten of us are roomin in a hay barn. The only good thing about it is that when your in bed the Top sargent cant tell wether your there or not without takin out all the hay.

As soon as we got here I noticed something awful strong an it wasnt no geranium bed ether. Were getting used to it now. You can tell how rich a Frenchman is by the size of his manure pile. There so proud of them they set them right outside there windos sos they can sit an watch them an never forget them. The bigger the pile the bigger man you are in your home town. All I can say is Im glad the people we live with is poor. Id hate to be bileted with the Mayor.

I got to quit now. The sensor cuts out most of this anyway. They say he tears off half of every letter to lighten the mails.

au reservoir as the French say

Bill

Dere Mable:

Id have rote you sooner only the sensor wont let me tell where I am an I couldnt think of nothin else to say. This is the third letter Ive rote since we landed. Im a little worried about the other two cause the Captin said we couldnt men-

shun the names of no places. So I just addressed them to Mable Gimp, nothin else.

In case you dont receive letters like that I wish youd let me know. Then I wont be expectin any answer. Ritin letters from here is like talkin to a fello over the fone that aint there.

Im having a little trouble with the languige. Its tricky. A lot of these French words is the same as ours only they dont mean the same thing. Like "Pan" an "We" an "Mercy" an "Toot sweet." As soon as I find what the words stand for Ill be all right.

Some of the fellos dont seem to get onto the idear of this thing at all. They think if they talk like they had an egg in there mouth an put in lots of zs its French. Take Joe Loomis for instance. He talks like a German thats lived with the French Canadians for a while. Hell go into a lunch room an say "Geeve me ze beef stak rar, mit ze on-yon." Then he gets sore when they put the wine list in front of him.

It aint the wine list that makes him sore of course. He cant get over the American custom tho of eatin with his meals.

The first three days we was here we didnt have no guns nor horses or nothin. I thought perhaps the Captin would give us a chance to get over that rest camp, but he seems to have an idear tho that just so many of us has got to be killed in the war an the quicker he gets it over with the better.

So every day he walks us about ten killen meters with the sun hot enuff to boil eggs.

The guns came yesterday. There painted up like a ten cent sunset. They call them Soizant Cans, whatever kind that is. They look pretty much in the bean blower class to me. One of those guns we left back in the States would take care of the four of them. But of course after polishin those up last winter till I almost wore them out the Captin had to come off an forget them. I guess now were stuck with these.

No horses came with the guns. I suppose we got to pull them around ourselves for the rest of the war. I can just here the Captin tellin Gen. Perishing, "No, no, General. My men havnt got a thing to do. Outside of a couple of single mounts for the oficers I wont need a horse."

I wish your mother could see the wimmin wash close over here. She might get more enjoyment out of that lawndress of hers. There is a lot of summer houses down beside a creek behind the town. Every day they go down there an stand in a barrel right in the creek. First they take the close an drag them around the creek for a while. Then they lay them on a wooden block an beat the buttons off them with a big board. A button in a steam lawndry leads a life of quiet ease compared with these.

After they get them hammered out flat they hang them on a barb wire fence. In the eve-

ning they take home anything the cows has left in an old wheelbarro. I guess by that time there dirty enuff to wash agen cause there always washin and you dont see no results.

We spend all our time now drillin with those little guns. Of course there different from those we had in the States so everything we learned over there has to be forgot. As far as I can make out we might as well have learned basket weavin for all the good it did us.

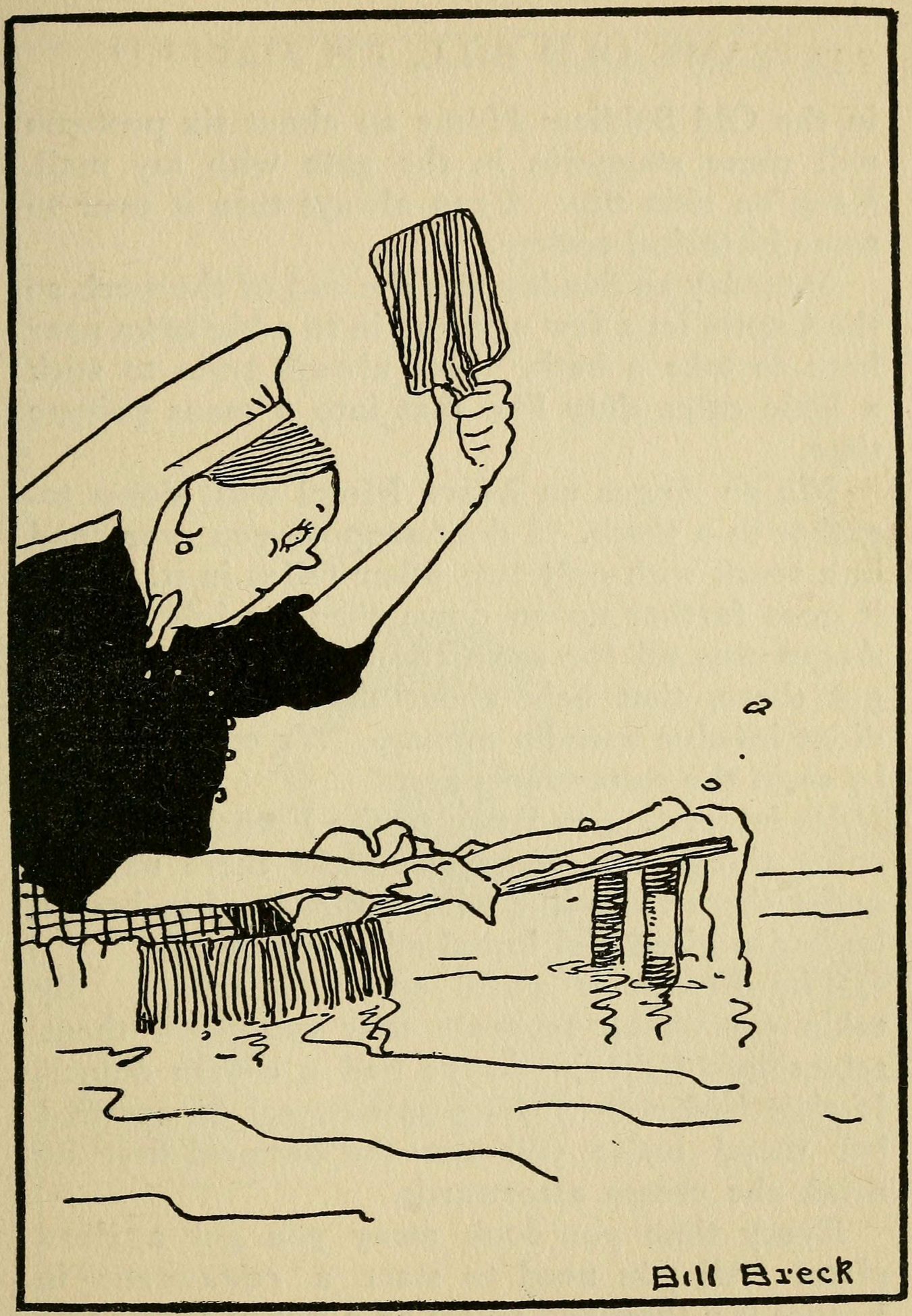
Well, Mable, have as good a time as you can at home. I know how tiresome those broken-winded fellos must be. Id go around with them tho once in a while in case they should ask you. Democratic. Thats me all over, Mable. Its the only thing your father an me has got in common. Besides it will make it seem all the better when I get home.

Yours in spite of these things

Bill

Dere Mable:

I guess your last letter must have been sensored to death cause I never got it. I been over here three weeks now an the only letter I got was a bill for some flowers I sent you a year ago. That fello would make more money as a detective then a flowerist. I bet hed have found Charlie Ross if Charlied owed him any money. I expect to be sittin propped up agenst the wall some day



"BEAT THE BUTTONS OFF THEM WITH A BIG BOARD"

in the Old Soldiers Home an about six postmen will come staggerin in the gate with my mail. Keep on ritin tho. I can always turn it over to some historical society.

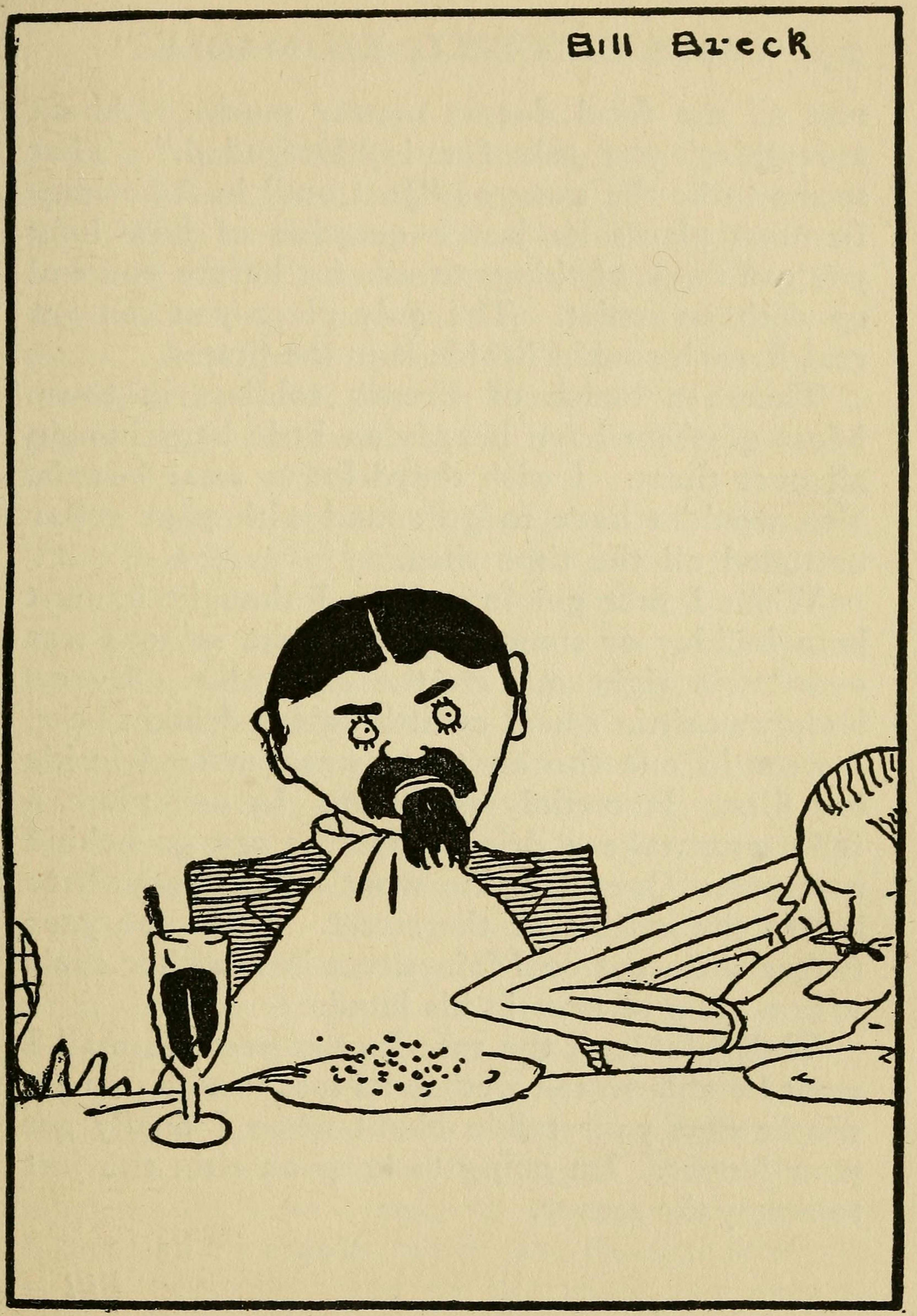
Saturday an Sunday was the end of the week so the Captin let a few of us go in to a big town near here to take a bath. Hes always tryin to stick a little extra duty like that into a mans private time.

Me an Angus an Marv Motel went down together in a truck. I dont suppose you ever road in a truck with only two other fellos in it. I bet it goes farther up an down then straight ahead. Angus was all for seein the town as soon as we got there, that bein about the only thing that didnt involve spendin money. We compromized by seein the restawrants first.

Its interesting to lissen to the French eat, they enjoy things so. Everyone tucks there napkins under there chins like your father used to before he had a hired girl insted of your mother.

The French is awful optimistic eaters. By takin everything separate they can work themselves into believin theyve had a course dinner. If they had such a thing as oatmeal an cream I bet theyd make you eat the oatmeal first an drink the cream afterwards.

Every time you look away you get a clean plate. All you need to start a restawrant in France is a thousand plates an a dozen eggs. The



"EVERYONE TUCKS THERE NAPKINS UNDER THERE CHINS"

rest of the food doesnt matter much. About everything you ask for is "Defended." That seems to be the same as "Just out" in American. In most places its just a question of how long you can think of things to ask for before you end up with an omlet. The only place you can get real French cookin Mable is in the States.

Theres a bunch of French soldiers in town. Most of them have beards an little bags hangin all over them. I wish theyd let us wear beards. You wouldnt have to go round with your collar buttoned all the time then.

When I first got into town I thought it must be a holiday or something cause the saloons was overflowin right out on the sidewalks. Everybody was sittin round at little tables drinkin beer. I went in one tho an there wasnt a soul inside but flies. It certinly is mixin. In one place a fello wont take a drink unless he can go behind a screen. Over here he wont have it anywhere but in the middle of the street. I can see your father sittin out on Main street in a wicker chair with a stein of beer in his hands.

Well Mable at the rate Im not receivin mail I wont be able to tell wether its last winter or next winter that your talkin about when I finally get your letters. Im going to keep on ritin tho just to annoy the sensor.

Yours in haste

Bill

Dere Mable:

In a training camp once more beginin all over agen. If we had a school system like this in civil life a fello would never live to finish high school.

Were not livin in stables any more. They got us now in long stone buildins with wood cots in them. I suppose somebody back at headquarters heard of soft pine an thought it would be a good thing for makin beds. I feel as full of bones as an old herrin.

We didnt have to pull the guns over after all. They tied them on behind trucks. I was makin up a nice bed for myself in the back of a truck when the Captin stuck his head in. He certinly believes in exercisin his neck. As soon as he saw I was comfortable he says "Smith, you ride on the end caisson an watch the brake." There was no use tellin him Id seen the darn thing every day for two weeks. He thinks he knows everything.

Of course youve never ridden on a caisson tied behind a truck. You never went hitchin with a bob sled behind an express train in the middle of summer nether. It was just luck that the old thing happened to be under me every time I came down. Some times it would go crazy an run from one side of the road to the other like it was lookin for a chance to pass the truck. I dont know what would have happened if the rope hadnt busted. That caisson must have thought it was a tank. It turned right off the road, ran over a

little ditch an tried to clime a tree. It didnt have the build tho an quit.

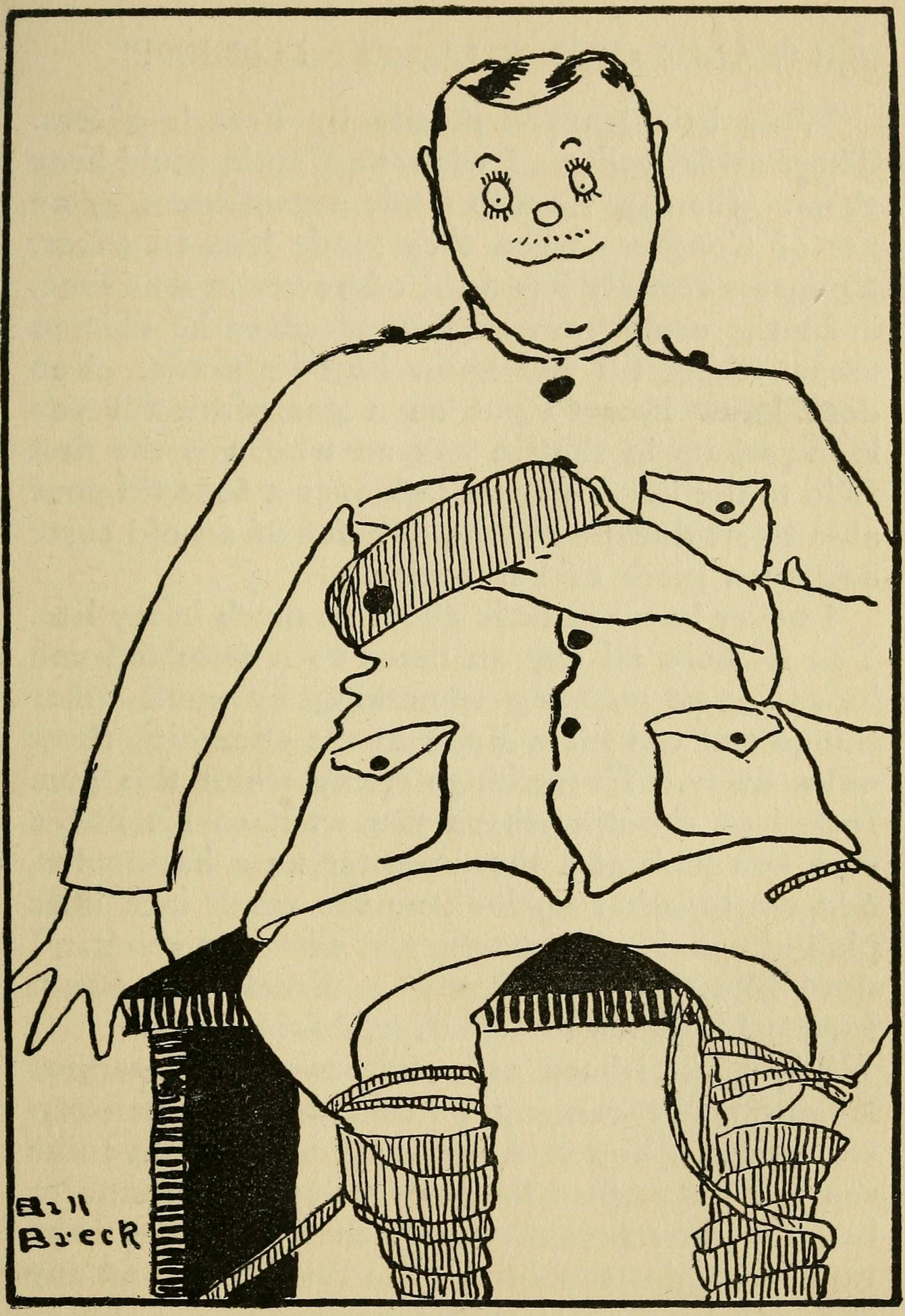
The next thing I remember the Captin was sayin "Smith, what are you tryin to do with that caisson, smash it?" Just as if Id swiped the darn thing to go for a joy ride.

Well, Mable, your letter came at last. From the looks of it they must have dragged the mail bag all the way. That certinly was interestin about that poor young fello Archie Wainwright. It must be awful to have a murmur in your heart when you want to go to war so bad.

Tell him not to worry about missin the war cause when I get back Ill show him so much about it hell feel like a veteran in half an hour an his family will be hangin out a service flag.

We just got ishued two new Lootenants inside of a week. Its gettin harder an harder to rite anything interestin that youll understand. For instance the first Lootenant was a 2nd and the second Lootenant was a 1st. That shows you how tecknickle it all is but of course its over your head like a shower-bath.

One of the Lootenants came over as a casulty oficer. He just came now from Sam Moores College of Artilery over here in France. They turn them out of there like Fords. If he knows as much as he admits he does I dont see why they bother to put a high priced fello like Fosh in command for.



"THEY JUST ISHUED US OVERSEERS CAPS AN RAPPED LEGGINS"

Were bein learned mostly by French oficers. There awful polite. I wish the Captin could hear them. Joe says he was made a gentleman by an act of Congress when they made him an oficer. Congress certinly has a lot of power in war time.

In the army your not supposed to be able to use anything till you know how its made. You dont know how to put on a gas mask till you know whats in the tin box an who was the first fello to use it. You cant talk over a fone till your able to sit down an make one out of an old cigar box an a piece of balin wire.

I never knew so little about so much in my life. You sit here all day an lissen to a fello tell you how if you multiply something by enuff other things you can hit a Fritz in the stummick three miles away. Everythings tricky about this gun. Insted of shootin where you want to hit like a man you look at a thermometer an a barometer, add em together an look up the result in a little pink almanak. That tells you where to shoot. I dont like this mystick stuff. Frank and straitforward. Thats me all over, Mable.

They just ishued us overseers caps an rapped leggins. Theres one good thing about these overseers caps. You cant put them out of shape like the felt hats cause they never had any shape to begin with. I cant say much in favor of the rapped leggins tho for a fello that never had any experience with first aid or nothin.

I cant see any sense tho in ishuin close like a pictur puzzle. They might just as well ishue your coat an pants in seckshuns an let you hook em together every mornin.

I got to quit now. I was left behind to clean out the barracks an I hear the battery comin in from drill so I got to hussle. Tell Archie to cheer up about the war. When I come home hell be wearin so many wound stripes hell be lookin like a zebra.

Yours till Archie gets a service stripe

Bill

Dere Mable:

Theyve made me a door tender to a Soizant Cans. All Ive got to do is to open the door an another fello puts in the shell. Then I close the door an start the shell on its way with a piece of string. Its a pretty important job cause if I dont latch the door the whole works will probably come out the back entrance.

Our horses came today. They must have thought this was a mobile vetrinary hospittle insted of a battery. Whoever grooms those things will have to lean them up agenst something. I read somewhere how the average life of a horse in this war is only 60 days. Accordin to that this bunch has seen about seven weeks service already.

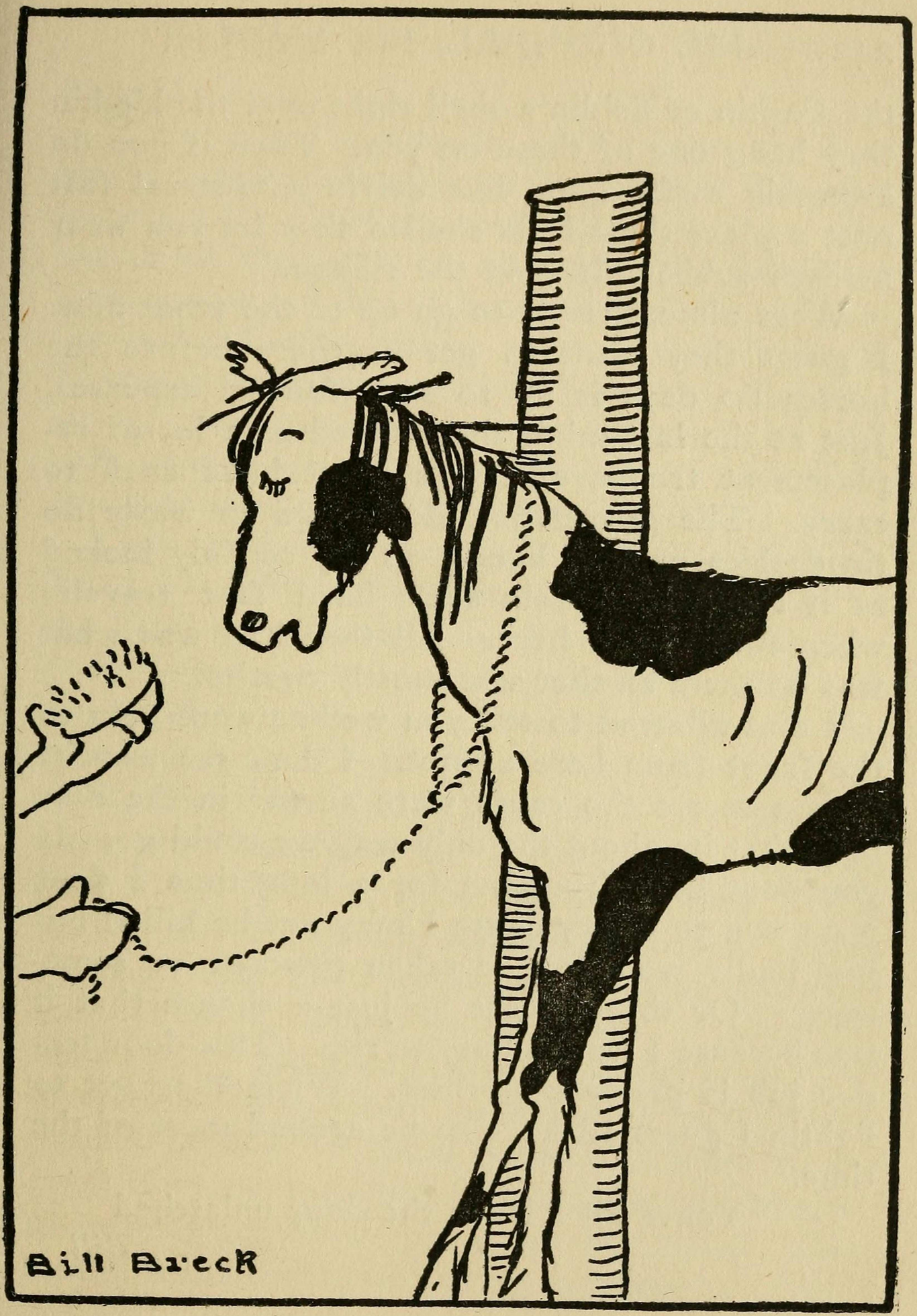
Every mornin we go out to the range an shoot

away liberty bonds. The good part about shootin into a desert like that is that theres nothin out there to hit so you can call it a bullseye no matter where you land. The oficers just walk around shakin hands an tellin each other what good shots they are. They sit up behind the guns in a place that looks like the press box of a baseball game. It has a nice roof an everything. When it rains they just pull their toes in sos the water wont drip offen the roof on them. Then they say "This is war. We cant stop for a little wet." Every time a fello fires they call it a problem. About the biggest problem is to figger what their firin at.

In the afternoon we go to school. Yesterday a fello gave us a talk on the "Art of Handlin Men." Marv Motel says he knew him in New York. He used to be a rubber in a Turks bath on 42nd street.

Theyve ishued green badges to the fellos that was down on the border. It looks like St. Patricks day around here. Angus MacKenzie that wasnt there calls them horse exercise medals. The day I put mine on the French fello thats learnin us about telefones came up an shook hands with me. All the Frogs think somebody has sighted us for bravery. Its a good thing nobody knows enuff French to tell them about it.

The French have a medal they call the Crawdy Gare. If you do something pretty good like sittin on a hand granade sos it wont go off an bother



"WILL HAVE TO LEAN THEM UP AGENST SOMETHING"

the Captin or fieldin a shell right over the kitchin they hang one of these on you. Then if you do somethin awful good like drivin a General fast past a place thats been shelled they let you wear a silver rubber plant on the ribbon.

Were almost ready to go up to the front now. I guess they want to get us there before the horses 60 days is up to save funeral expenses. Just at the last minit they ishued us a lot of replacement troops as if we didnt have enuff to carry. The governmint dont need to waste no tin derbies on that bunch. They certinly looked as if theyd been doin some hard fast travelin when they struck here. All they had was what was on them an that was mostly cooties.

I aint allowed to tell you wether were goin to the front from here or not. I dont see why its such a secret tho cause were so far in the rear here that its about the only way we could go. If you dont here from me for a long time I dont want you to worry cause I may not be killed but just badly wounded or taken prisoner or something. Or there might be just a chance that it was because I was to busy to rite. This door tender job is pretty important. When they get to fightin I guess Ill have to be around most of the time.

Yours till I leave the door unlatched

Bill

Dere Mable:

Were on our way to the front. I bet the Kiser an that funny lookin kid of his is gettin there pulmoters out. We traveled three days an two nights on the train an now we been hikin two nights more. I havnt heard a gun yet. I dont think the Captin knows where the front is. Theres a roomer around that we got off at the wrong stashun. I suppose now we got to walk half way across France just because that fello dont know how to read a time table.

They landed us in a field outside of a town. Youd have thought we got off right in front of the Fritz trenches the way the oficers acted. The new Lootenant bawled everybody out for not wearin there gas masks at the alert. That means tyin it under your chin like a bib.

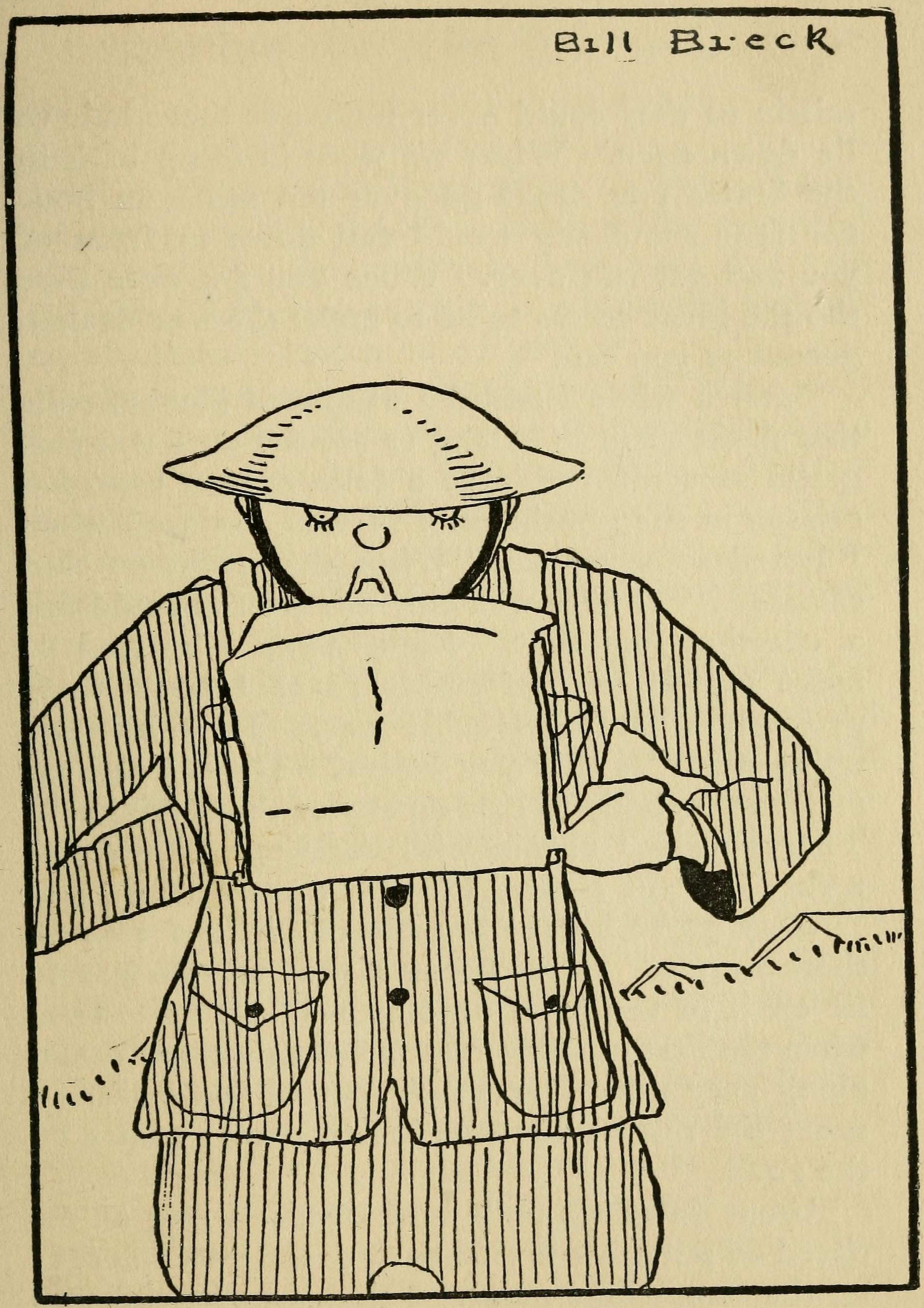
We didnt lose much time unloadin. Nobody knew then but what the Fritzes might want to park a few Berthas right where we were. Then we just sat around in the rain and waited. After about an hour the Captin came splashin down the road an says "Harness an hitch. Come on. Hurry up." He always gives an order as tho hed given it an hour before an nobodied paid any attenshun to him. It didnt sound reasonable to me cause it was gettin dark then an it would be time to turn in before we could get any place. Bein a cannon ear tho an not havin anything to do with

the horses I didnt say anything. Willin. Thats me all over, Mable.

After wed got hitched up we stood around for an hour more blottin up rain. The Captin just leaned agenst his horse smokin a cigar as tho that was the best place in the world to spend the evenin. Hes got one of these Drench coats so it doesnt make any difference to him if everybody else dissolved. Just as it was gettin dark a fello came up on a motor cycle an gave him some mail. Then we started. It made the fellos awful sore cause they say thats all he was waitin for. I thought of course the Bilitin oficer had found some place that was worse down the road an was takin us there for the nite. But we just marched an marched till everybody could see that the Captin didnt know where he was goin.

We couldnt light a light or scratch matches or nothin. The Captin said a lot of Dutch airyplanes was out to get us an as soon as we struck a light theyd drop bums on us. Then he passed the word back that nobody was to talk above a whisper. The old guns rattle so you couldnt hear anybody unless he yelled anyway. The Captin means all right but he read to much cheap literachoor when he was a kid.

Every few minits a string of trucks would go tearin by in the other direcshun. None of them had any lights. Its lucky they didnt cause if they could have ever seen how near they came to not



"TYIN IT UNDER YOUR CHIN LIKE A BIB"

missin us they could never have got there hair to lie down agen. When we were in camp back in the States you dasnt go over ten miles an hour for fear somebody would fall down in front of you and get run over. When you get over here tho the idear seems to be to make the war as dangerous as you can.

After a while I undid a couple of blanket rolls that didnt seem to belong to anyone an I was just gettin as comfortable as a fello can on top of a caisson in the pourin rain. I was dozin off when I heard someone say "Whos that ridin on that carriage?" There was only one person could ask a question like that. Right away I started to make myself uncomfortable cause I knew thats probably what the trouble was. Then he rode up an says "Is that you Smith? Didnt you hear me order nobody to ride on any of the carriages?" Theres no use arguin with the Captin. Its just a case of "All right. Have it my way."

They go to all the trouble of bildin a seat on these wagons. They spend a year teachin you to sit on it in the most uncomfortable way. Then when the first possible reason for usin them comes along they make everybody get off an walk. I spent the rest of the nite kickin mud puddles off the road.

About dawn we pulled off the road into an orchard an put some branches over the guns to cover up the camooflage paint. I thought after bein up

all nite on account of his foolishness the Captin would at least take pity on the horses an let them alone. That would have given us some chance to sleep. Nothin would do tho but that we spend about half the day smoothin them out. He says it makes them feel good. Of course the way we feel hasnt got nothin to do with it.

After wed scoured the horses till they must have been sorer than we were they gave us some monkey meat an let us turn in. Back to the hay barns agen. That Bilitin oficer ought to make good on some board of health when we get home. He can pick out all the worst places in a town ten minites after he gets there.

Sleepin in the daytime is a kind of a joke anyway in the army. Every time you get to sleep the horses has to be fed. And when your not feedin them you got to get up an feed yourself. In the army a fellos hungry when they tell him to eat an no other time.

After theyd blown a horn at me about eight different times I figgered I might as well stay up an rite you a letter. Now that were gettin up near the front Im goin to rite just as much as I can. Thats partly sos you wont worry an partly so that if I get knocked off you will have something to amuse you in case you go into a convent.

I had to leave all those sweters an caps an everything that you nitted me last winter. You dont need to feel bad about that tho cause they

wouldnt let us wear them anyway. If everybody wore all the stuff thats been nitted for them since the war started this would look more like an ice carnival than an army. Its sentiment that counts, tho, not wool.

In the meantime still

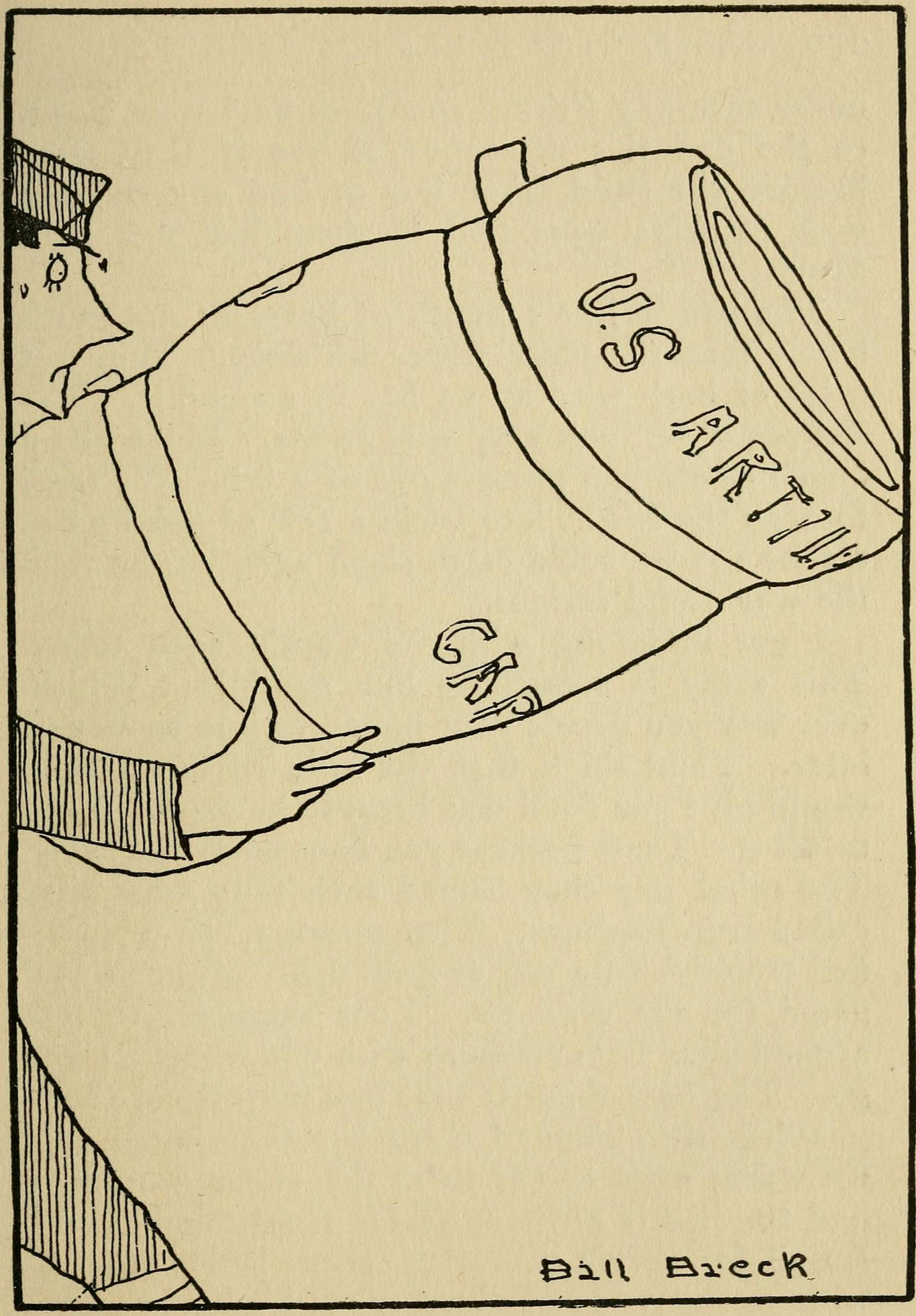
Bill

Dere Mable:

After travelin for three nites we dont seem to be any nearer the front than we ever was. Ether the Fritzes are retreatin in trucks or were goin the wrong way. The only reason were not marchin tonite is because when we got into this town the Captin found a chatto for his P. C. P. C. is military, Mable. It means a place for the Captin. Mike Whozis, the Captins orderly, says hes got one of those limosine beds with a roof an sides on it. Its so big it dont make any difference how you lie on it. If all he says about it is true we may stick around for the rest of the war.

Well, never mind. Sailor Gare as the French say. Thats some old pirate they blame everything on over here.

A bunch of prisoners came in last nite. They must have surrounded half the German army cause it looked like a decorashun day parade when the M.P. brought them in. If they make another hawl like that well have about as much to fire at up at the front as we did back on the range. Id



"MIKE WHOZIS, THE CAPTINS ORDERLY"

never seen any Fritzes so Angus an I went down to the pen this afternoon to see if they were breakin the child labor law or had any wimmin with machine guns tied to them like you read about.

The pen is just a bunch of barracks not much better than the place where we sleep. They got a lot of barb wire an an M. P. around it. The Fritzes didnt look very wild to me. More like a bunch of stashun porters out of a job. We tried to argu the M. P. into lettin a few of them go at a time sos we could catch them agen but he took the war awful serious.

I got in wrong with the Captin agen today. This army is something like gamblin. Whichever way you decide your bound to lose sooner or later. Youd think that the only reason a fello would give you food was because he expected you to eat it. Thats because you dont know the army. The other day they ishued each fello what they called Irun Rashuns. That means a can of petrified crackers an a can of gold fish. Its not a bad name for the crackers. Your supposed to tote around your Irun Rashuns with you wherever you go. The only thing is that you mustnt eat them.

When they handed them out the Captin said we wasnt ever to eat them unless we absolutely had to. As if anybody in his right mind would. Im all for obeyin orders tho when it dont conflict with my duty. Joe Balderose ate his half an hour

after breakfast and then wanted me to split with him on mine. I says "No. Not till I absolutely have to. An then Ill be so far gone that you wont have a look in." I waited till hap past ten tho I was gettin awful weak the last half hour. Youd ought to have heard the Captin when he saw me. Youd have thought I was eatin some of his old harness.

As far as I can see, Mable, its just another of his ways of passin the buck. If General Perishing should happen to find one of us starved to death some mornin he wants to be able to show him we had plenty of food on us when we slipped away. Hes smart all right, that fello.

You cant tell what may happen before I have a chance to rite agen but we wont cross any bridges before we leap as the poets say.

Yours to the last crum

Bill

Dere Mable:

Were on the front at last in what they call a quiet sector. Most of the soldiers round this place is French. I understand there pretty sore at the Americans cause some of them came up here and began shootin up the Germans. Of course you cant have a decent war if nobodies goin to pay any atenshun to the rules.

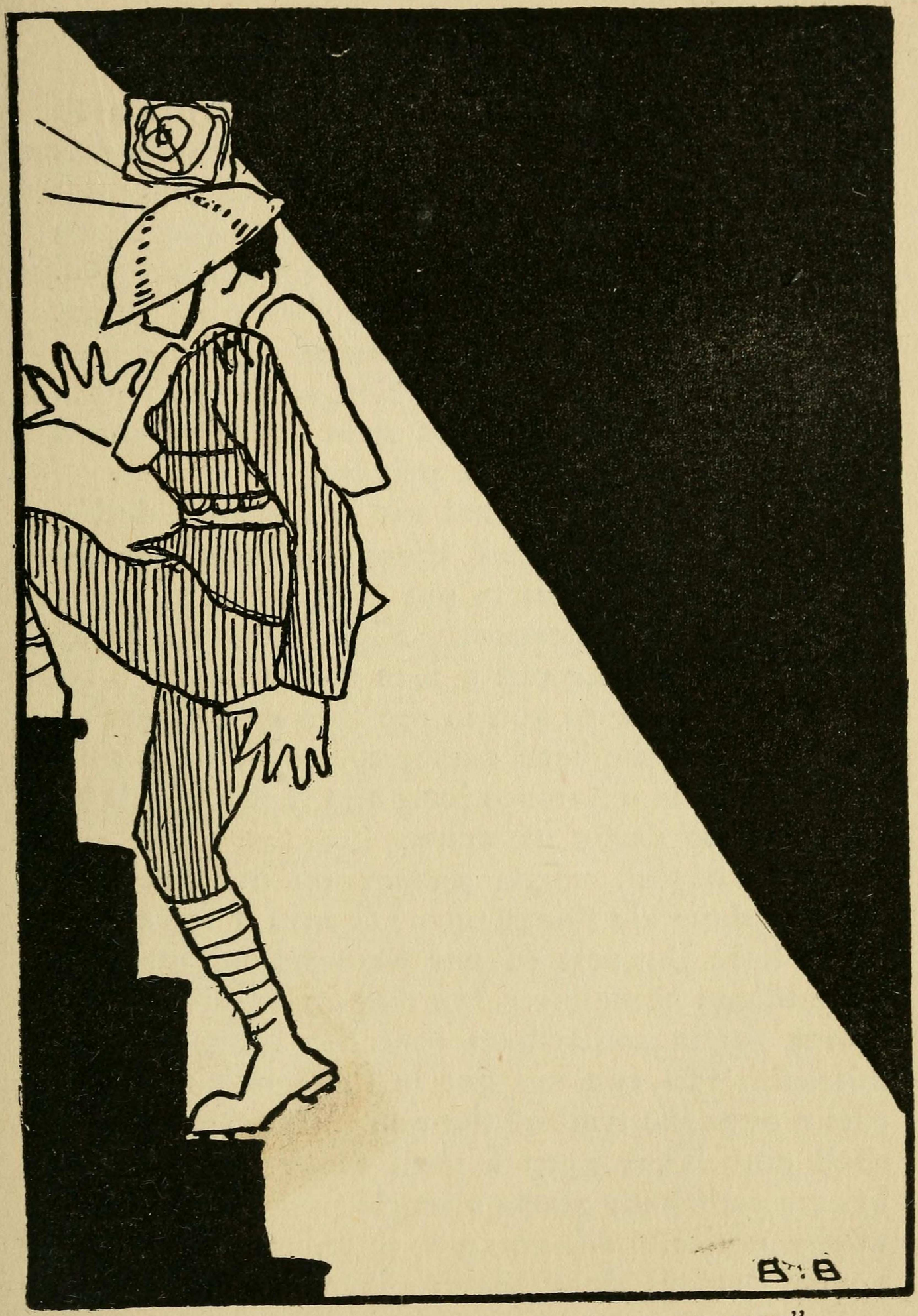
The worst part of the war is gettin to it. I been rained on so much the last week I feel like

an old sponge. Every nite weve been marchin along thru the pitch dark with trucks an guns an everything else that rattles poundin along on each side.

Nobody could strike a light durin the whole trip. Then when we get to this place the Frenchmen that we were goin to relieve came out in the road with lanterns to see who we were. Its a wonder the Captin didnt make us crawl up on our hands an knees.

We finally got the guns in posishun. How we found the place in the dark is more than I can tell. Were in the middle of a ruined village. It looks like those picturs of old Greek office buildins that hangs in the high school hall. Its funny, Mable, but the first real rest Ive had since I got in the army is since Ive got to the front. The only livin thing we see is rats an airyplanes. The archies shoot all day at the planes but it dont seem to bother them much. They just sail along like a limosine with a lot of little dogs tryin to bite off the tires. I guess if they ever hit one the shock would kill the gun crew as quick as it would the pilot.

Our guns is pointed at a hill right in front of us. Every mornin we fire a few shots at this an then spend the rest of the day cleanin the guns. If they used these guns as much as they clean them the war would have been over long ago. Toward evenin the Fritzes return the complement. Ev-



"IVE FOUND THE FIRST REAL USE FOR MY TIN DERBY"

erybody comes out to see where they land but they must fire them up in the air cause nobodies ever been able to find out yet. When your not cleanin the gun or on gard you have to stay down in your dugout sos the airyplanes wont see you. Theyve got to be awful quick if they want to get a sight of me. Ive got the deepest dugout except for the Captin. When the Top sargent wants a detail you can bet hes not goin to clime down fifty steps after one Buck private.

Ive found the first real use for my tin derby. The fello that invented these dugouts couldnt seem to decide wether to put in stairs or a ladder so he split the difference. Right across the top of the entrance he put a nice sharp beam. Its fixed so that it gets you in the chin goin down an on the top of the head comin up. Hed have split more than the difference long ago if it hadnt been for that tin derby of mine.

Marv Motel, whats gunner on my piece, is busy all day fixin things up. He says if were goin to be here the rest of our lives we mights well have things homelike. He dug up an old rug an a lace curtin somewhere that the Germans had missed. The rug hes got in the gun pit an the curtin over the trail of the gun to set the barrage shell on. They keep a shell ready all the time in case somebody starts a battle without the usual weeks notice. Marvs got it shined up like a young doctors door plate. Every nite he raps

it up an put an old one in its place. Angus says when he gets time hes goin to carve the names of the gun crew on the side sos we can take it back an give it to some museum.

Well, Mable, you might as well take down your service flag. I guess the only action Ill ever see is when I get home an meet Archie Wainwright.

Yours till theres something doin

Bill

Dere Mable:

Well, you can take your service flag out of moth balls agen. An if the Fritzes try any more monkey bisiness like they did this mornin you can buy a can of radiator paint for the star.

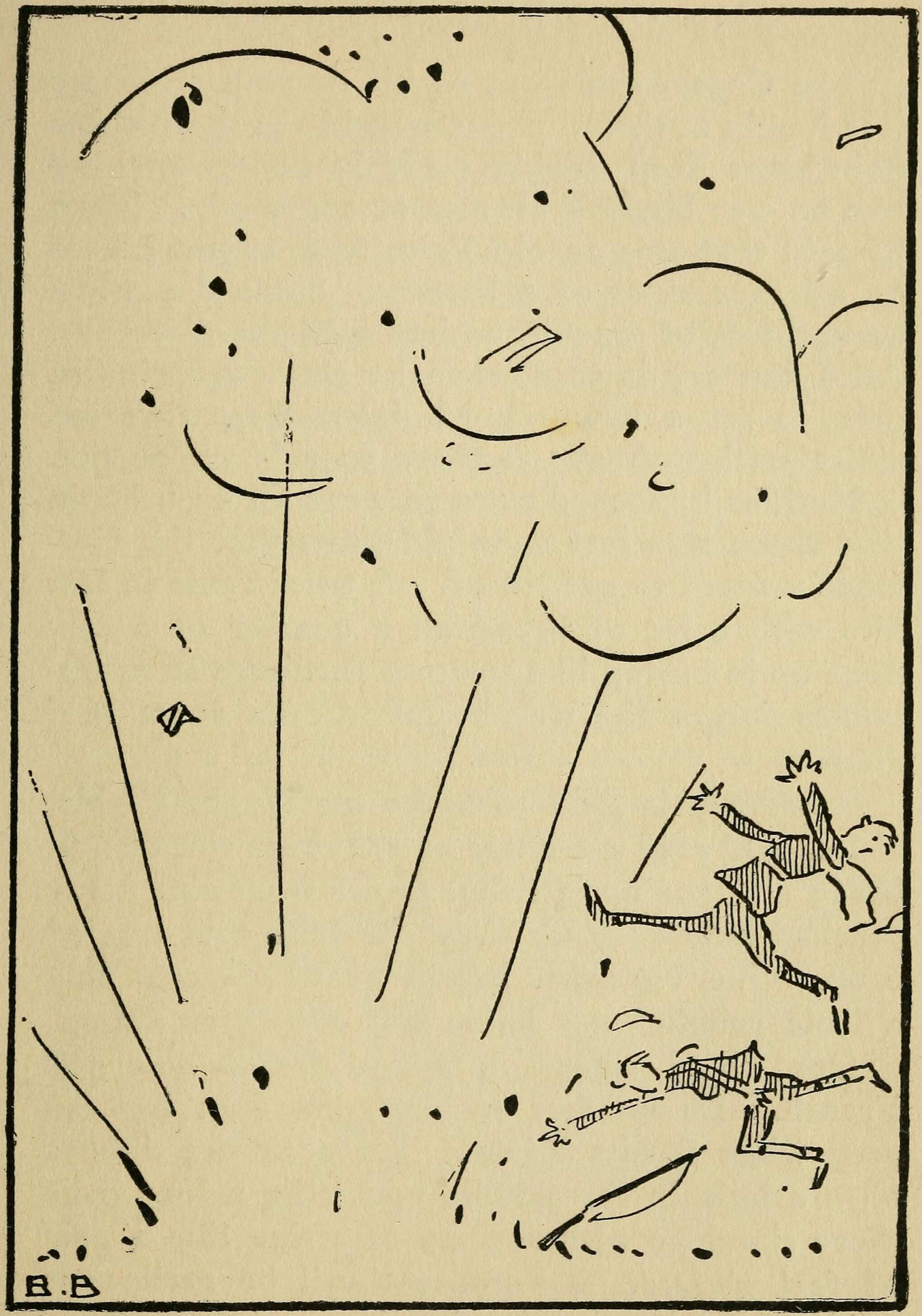
Angus an I was standin outside the dugout finishin our mornin goldfish an plannin a few correkshuns for the army when a boiler exploshun happened right behind us. After things had quieted down a bit I looked out from behind a piece of old stone wall where I seemed to be lyin, to see if there was anything left for identificashun. I saw a foot layin outside the dugout. I knew it belonged to Angus cause hes the only man in the army with one like it. I was just goin to pick it up thinkin his family might like it to remember him by when another foot came out. Then the whole of him. Hed crawled under an old pawlin that had been spread out to dry. This war certinly has proved that fish aint a brain food. Out-

side of bein a little mussed up from a mud pubdle hed found under the pawlin he seemed all right. When I ast him if he was lookin for anything, tho, he got all worked up. The Skotch is awful emoshunal.

While we was standin there wonderin wether somebodied been smokin in bed in the amunishun dug out another boiler blew up right in front of us. At least I think it was in front as near as I could tell from the bottom of the dug out stairs. Angus saved my life that time cause we both happened to go down the stairs together an I went down on top of Angus.

Marv Motel was asleep down in the dug out. He got awful sore an wanted to know how a fello was ever goin to get any rest with a bunch of this an that fools rough housin around all day. Then came two more black hand awtrocities. Angus swears the second one rocked the dug out so his mess kit slid right offen the table. Things quieted down after that so we went out finally to see if we could pick up any soovenirs out of the wreck.

Well, Mable, Id have bet anybodies money before I went out that none of those shots had lit more than ten feet away. It took us half an hour tho before we could locate all the holes. When we did they was all about a hundred yards away. The funny part about it was that there was one in front and back an one on each side of the battery.



"ANOTHER BOILER BLEW UP RIGHT IN FRONT OF US"

The Captin came out of his dug-out while we was lookin at them. I guess hed been down there doin some deep thinkin. He looked them over like he was Shylock Homes or somebody. Then he said that was an old Fritz trick to put a shot on all four sides of a battery. Some day when he had lots of amunishun hed split the diference. All I can say is that when he starts splittin Im goin to set a new rekord down these dug out stairs wether Angus is there to ride on or not.

Nothins happened since so weve all been hopin that those was just four old shots that the Germans wanted to get rid of. A truck came in last nite with a lot of bread an a quarter of a cow done up in burlap like summer furniture so everybodies forgot the war in favor of a roast beef dinner.

It certinly is goin to make me laugh, Mable, if I should ever get home an see those sines about bread all done up in tishue paper what aint never touched human hands since the fello that rapped it up. Over here they handle bread like coal only a little rougher not havin any shoots an things.

Our bread comes in round loaves like the French. Its handier to carry an dont bust so easy when it hits things. Ive seen the doboys bore a hole in the middle and sling a loaf over there shoulder with a piece of string like a pair of feel glasses. I suppose theyll be gettin out

an order pretty soon about which side your to wear your bread on.

After all Ive eat tho I aint dead yet. Of course thats no permanent health certifikate.

I started this letter early this mornin. Now its almost nite agen. A fello never can get any work done without gettin interupted in the army. I got to quit now cause I was supposed to relieve Marv Motel on gard half an hour ago sos he could get his supper. I guess he wont mind when he finds out weve gone back to gold fish agen.

yours till they split the diference

Bill

Dere Mable:

We fooled the Fritzes by pullin out of that last place before theyd had a chance to split the diference. We came back to this little town for what they call a rest. That word "rest" dont mean the same thing as the one we use. For instance when an oficer comes into the room everybodys supposed to jump up like theyd been sittin on a tack. Then he says "Rest." Youd naturally think he meant lie down an take it easy for an hour or so. All he means is that you dont have to stand like a windo dummie.

An then agen when your standin in line an somebody says "Parade rest." Insted of lyin down in the grass somewhere an takin a smoke you grab hold of your thums an stick one foot

in front of the other like those old fotografs of your grandfather in the album.

The worst kind of rest tho is when you get back in a place like this. That means eight hours a day scrubbin guns an drillin an smoothin out horses. If that doesnt seem to set you on your feet you stand gard all nite.

The Bilitin oficer likes this place. Hes got my gun squad in a barn with half the roof shot off an the other half awful undecided. It isnt the part thats gone we mind so much as the part thats left. Id hate to come all this way just to interfere with a brick. Everybody wears there tin derby to bed at nite.

Payday came along this mornin. In the afternoon a couple of doboys came along that had just been paid to. Me an Angus took them on for a friendly game right off the Main street. It was rainin an the wind was blowin cats an dogs but we had most of the doboys money an they didnt seem to want to go till we had it all so nobody minded the wether much. Angus had just passed six times an about all the money we had was bet when there was a swish like a punctured tire an everything seemed to blow up all around.

There is times in this world when you dont stop to figger what nobody owes you. When I looked up agen I could see where it had lit in an old wreck across the street. The next thing I

noticed was that the doboys an all the money was gone. We never did find out wether they was blown up or skipped.

Were goin to move out of here now in a day or two. The Captin says were goin to a more active sector.

Yours till you read it in the papers

Bill

Dere Mable:

Were in a new posishun. That sounds like those vawdevel fellos that paint themselves gold an stand on one leg or a hired girl. It aint nothin like that tho. In the army a posishun is anywhere your guns happen to be. Just now ours is in a woods an a couple of feet of mud.

The horses is showin wear to. If theyd done half the work I have theyd be wearin a tin jacket labeled corn Willie long ago. Most of them is so thin you could hang your hat on there hips an there ribs would make a good letter file.

Every horse has got a gas mask tied under his chin. They think there nose bags an pretty near break there necks tryin to get at them. Ive showed my horse his mask open an everything. He doesnt seem to catch on tho. Thats the trouble with these French horses. You cant make them understand.

The Captin sent me back in the woods on a little undertakin job today. Lem Wattles horse

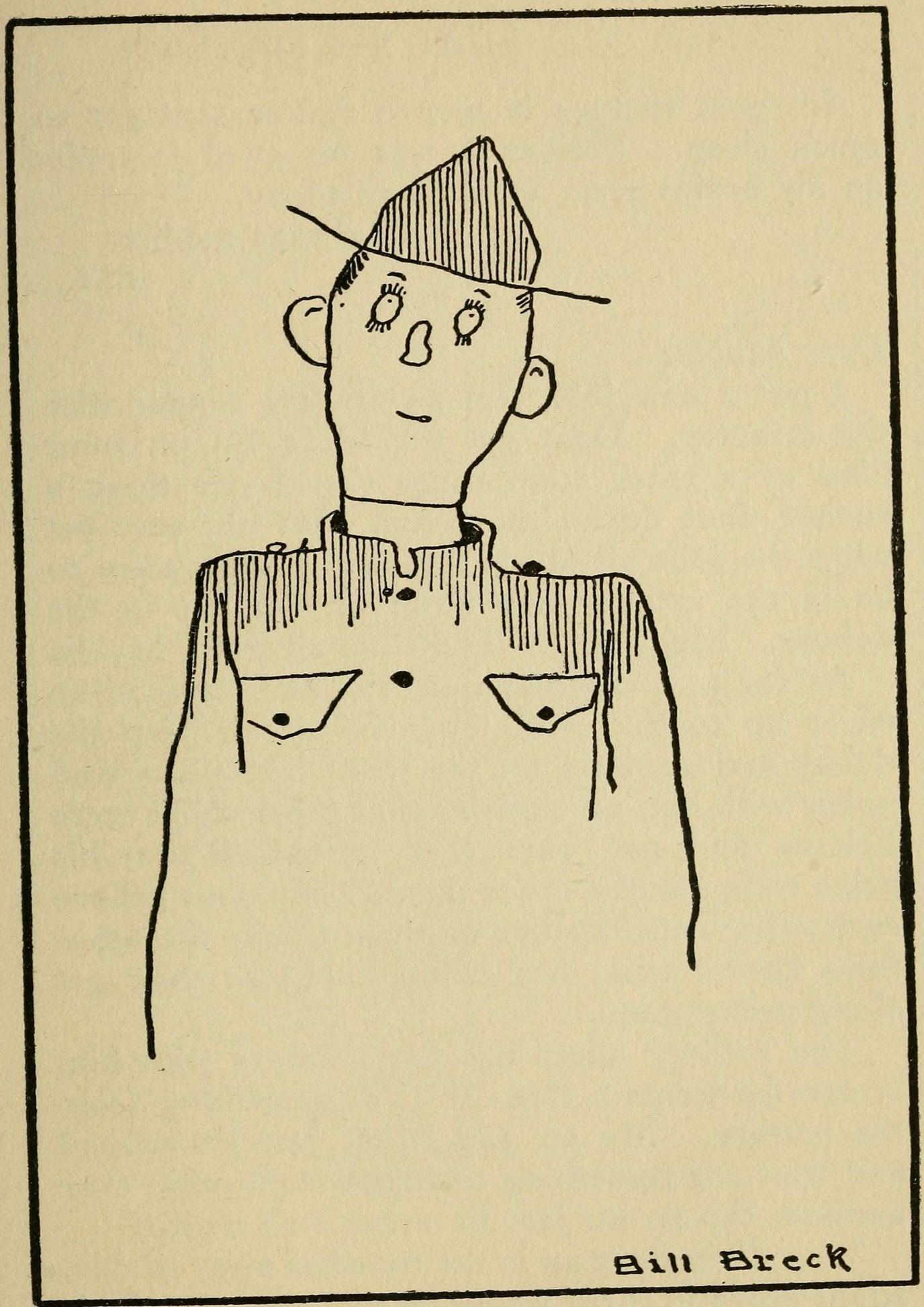
had succeeded in dyin after bein at it for two weeks. It was the only thing he ever put any effort in. Just to look at him you wouldnt see what took him so long. That horse just couldnt do anything quick tho. It seems Im always buryin horses. There so darn contrary theyll drag themselves for miles just to die at my feet.

We was sittin on the corps restin a while before we started to work when we heard one of those high powered wash boilers go off back by the guns. A minit later another landed. We postponed the funeral an went back to collect the identificashun tags. One shell had lit right behind my gun an thrown mud all over it. The other had planted itself in a field just outside the woods.

Now we got to pull out of here tonite an go somewhere else like a fello tryin to sleep on a park bench.

A lot of the fellos families is givin there letters to the newspapers. Sometimes they print there picturs with them. Lem Wattles what never had his name in the paper before except when he used to get arrested, showed me a piece about two feet long with his face on top. Of course none of the things he rote about ever happened. He was back at trainin camp when he rote them. Lem will fight if you call him a liar tho.

I dont mean this as a hint to you to give my letters to the papers cause Im tryin to avoid publicity.



"LEM WATTLES WHAT NEVER HAD HIS NAME IN THE PAPER"

Im goin to turn in now a fighter cant get to much sleep. Besides I was on gard last nite an my brains seem to be dead today.

as always modist

Bill

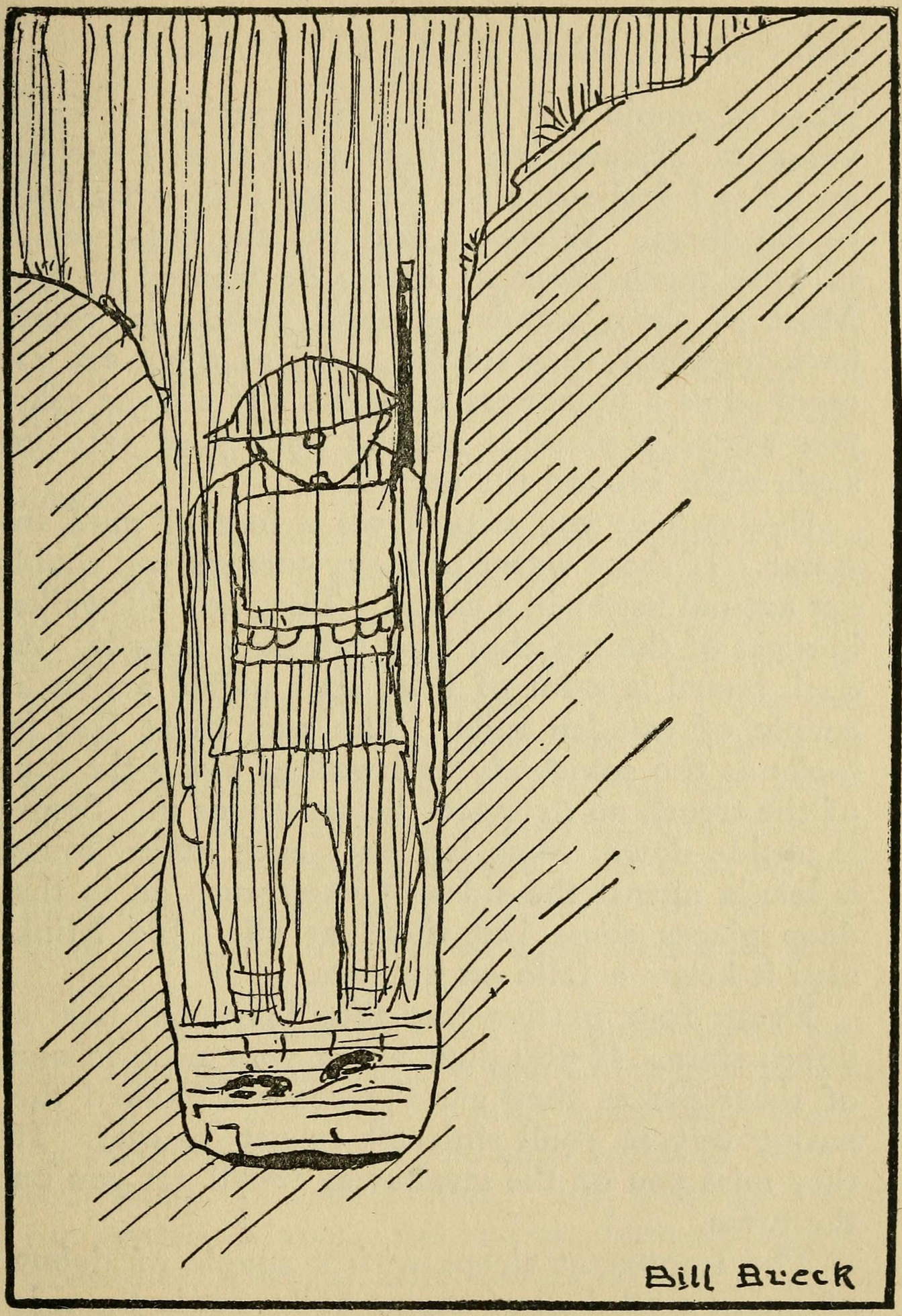
Dere Mable:

I got a new job. Im an artilery runner with the infantry. Dont get the idear Im on some kind of a track team cause theres one thing a runner dont do an thats run. Im not sure yet what the jobs all about myself. I dont seem to be in the artilery any more an Im not in the doboys. Mugwump. Thats me all over, Mable.

As far as I can make out the artilery send an oficer up to live with the infantry an keep the doboy majors mind off the war. He plays stud poker with him an explains that those shells were Fritzes and not ours that busted all over his prize company the other day. They dont believe each other cause nether of them thinks the other fello knows what hes talkin about so they get along pretty good.

The artilery oficer has two runners with him in case he wants a clean shirt or something from the battery. Me an Joe Mink just lie around and wait for something to happen. Nothin ever happens tho so we just lie around an wait.

Were livin right up in the trenches now, Mable. Right down in them would be more like it. This



"WERE LIVIN RIGHT UP IN THE TRENCHES NOW"

idear of comin into the war last certinly has advantages. Every time I look at all these trenches an holes I feel sorry for the poor fello what had to dig them. Whoever laid em out didnt seem to have much idear of where he wanted to go. Most of them wander around awhile an come back to where they started. All of them are as crooked as a plummers assistant. If anyone asks you where a place is around here your safe in sayin right around the corner.

Everywhere you step theres a foot of mud an water. If there wasnt so many corners you could get around better in a canoo. They got sidewalks in most of the trenches they call duck boards. A duck board is a lot of little slats nailed across a couple of wooden rails. The way there laid it looks as tho somebody had walked along the top of the trench an dropped the seckshuns in. Some is upside down, some lap over each other, some is leanin agenst the sides of the trench an in the deep places some isnt there at all. Joe Mink says it keeps a fello on his toes.

Every four or five feet they leave out half a dozen slats. If you dont break your neck in one of these places they get the corners banked the wrong way so youll slide off an get drownd. If they miss you on the straitaway theyll get you on the turns.

The Lootenant sleeps with a couple of doboy oficers in a sekshun of engine boiler set in the side

of the trench. I sleep down in a place that looks like an old mine. About the only way you could get a shell into the thing would be to lower it down with a rope. Its the best billet Ive struck up here tho. Theres no windos for fresh air feends to be monkeyin with all the time, an of course there aint no light to shine in your face when your tryin to sleep. The only trouble is theres seven fellos sleepin there an only five bunks so we got to take turns sleepin. The floor is to muddy.

That is to say, Mable, seven fellos an two hundred rats. I never used to take much stock in those rat stories but I certinly take off my hat to them now. Thats about all you can take off unless you want to get eaten. These fellos will eat anything from the hobnails out of your shoes to a bag of Bull. They make a goat look like a dispeptik. You dont notice them while the candles are lit an your movin around. As soon as you blow out the light an lie still, tho, you can hear them comin out all over to have dinner off your equipment.

They have what they call a runners bench outside the tin house where the Lootenant sleeps. Joe an I is supposed to take turns sittin there. Its something like the bell hops bench in a hotel only this is an active front. You wont get that for a minit, Mable. All you can here when your sittin out there a fello inside saying "Hello.

Pancake. Get off the wire Peggy. I want Pancake. Pancake busy? Give me Pauline. Is that you Purgatory? This is Pineapple speakin."

After Id lissened to that for about half an hour I felt like the gate gard of a bug house. I got hold of the Lootenant in a friendly way an told him Id go halves on my bunk with him cause I didn't think it was safe to sleep with that fello. He might think he was a crum some night an try to choke somebody. The Lootenant said that was just a way they had of telefonin up here. He said you never could tell when a German might be lyin up on the roof or under a bunk lissenin to you. On account of that nobody called anybody else by there right name. For instance he said they called the General Pancake an the Colonel Peggy an this place was called Pineapple.

The more I thought about it the more it sounded like a good sensible idear to me. I went in an told the Lootenant that unless he had something better I thought Id call him Prune juice from then on. He said Id guessed wrong unless I wanted to act as a stone crusher on a road gang. The trouble with most of these fellos is there to stuck up to play the game. Its all right to call a General Pancake or a Colonel Peggy but you want to watch out what you call a 2nd Lootenant.

Well Mable, if what they say is true the doboys will be goin over pretty soon. The Lootenant says were goin with em. Its about as good

a chance to pick up a few first hand soovenirs as a fello could want. In case anything happens like my gettin killed or such dont bother about goin into mornin or buyin a lot of new letter paper. Just give them that pictur of me standin in front of the American flag. An when the reporters call for details remember the skies the limit.

yours until the Fritzes get me

Bill

Dere Mable:

Its nobodies fault but the Fritzes that you aint gettin an extinguished service medal insted of this letter. A couple of mornins after I rote you last Joe woke me up an said they were puttin on a battle upstairs. From the way they were shootin things up he thought they ought to be down in the dug-out in a little while. Joes the kind of a fello that gets you up an hour before theres any need for it. I told him to call me when he heard them at the top of the stairs. Practical. Thats me all over, Mable. Then I turned over to get some sleep.

Then the Lootenant came runnin down cussin an swearin because the fone was busted. He told us wed have to go back to the battery an tell em to snap out of it an show the Fritzes that it took two to make an argument. From where we was the Fritzes seemed to be puttin up a pretty good

argument all alone an most of it seemed to be goin in the direckshun of the battery. But Joe says Sailor Gare so we started off down the road. There was plenty of noise out there. It was awful foggy but you could see the red flashes once in a while when one of them lit in a field near the road.

Every time one busted Joe would duck into a ditch. He had me doin it pretty soon. The more we ducked the more we couldnt help it till we was goin down the road like a couple of Rushin dancers. Then we broke all the rules of the runners union an ran.

We didnt have no trouble findin the Captin cause we knew just where to look. Just as we started to go down in his dug-out we heard a big one comin and both landed together at the bottom. After a fellos face gets broken in to goin down stairs that way its the easiest way. The Captin was awful sore. He wanted to know what the this an that we meant by comin in without knockin. That fello would want you to salute if you had both arms shot off. I didnt say nothin. Just gave him the Lootenants message.

That seemed to make him madder still. He pushed the papers around on his desk an said didnt that one thing an another Lootenant know he couldnt get fire without orders from regimental headquarters. An didnt he know that regimental headquarters couldnt give any order till they was asked for it by doboy headquarters. An why the

this an that didnt we go to the doboys if we wanted some fire.

Id like to have told him where to go to get some fire. I just saluted tho, an said "Yes sir." Spirited. Thats me all over, Mable. Then we went back to pass the buck to the Lootenant. The doboy oficers was all sittin around tellin him how good the Inglish artilery was. A couple of hours later when Joe an I was havin breakfast we heard the battery fire about twenty shots. The doboys said it was lucky we didnt fire any more cause they was probably all shorts anyway. That dont mean that they were a different size or anything, Mable. A short is a shell that hasnt got the ambishun.

I went up to an artilery observashun post with the Lootenant the other day. Only it isnt a post but a round tin house like a ticket office set in the trenches on top of a hill. Theres a slit cut in the front to look thru. The Lootenant showed me where Nobodies land was. I could see the Fritz trenches runnin in front of a piece of woods about half a mile away. They must have all been away on a furlo or something cause there wasnt as much as a fly sittin over there.

This is a great place for soovenirs. I got a lot of buttons, a piece of shell, a couple of bones I found stickin out of the trench an a Fritz hand grenade. As soon as I can find a box Im goin to send you the whole bunch. I wouldnt monkey

with the hand grenade much. It doesnt look as if it had ever exploded. Give it to Archie Wainwright an tell him its a trench warmer. Maybe hell stick it in the fire.

In the afternoon when things is quiet an everybodies asleep we go out an throw hand grenades at the rats. Thats good sport cause you got to be quick or youll get your self insted of a rat. Joe Mink had to spoil it of course by blowin in dug outs. Hed have been all right if hed picked old dug outs but he wasnt satisfied till hed found one with a fello comin up the stairs. I dont see yet tho why there was such a holler raised. The old thing didnt go off. It just caught the fello in the stummick an knocked some wind out. He blacked Joes eyes an then went to the Major. Joes back in the eschelon now groomin horses. Angus MacKenzie has come up in his place so Im just as satisfied.

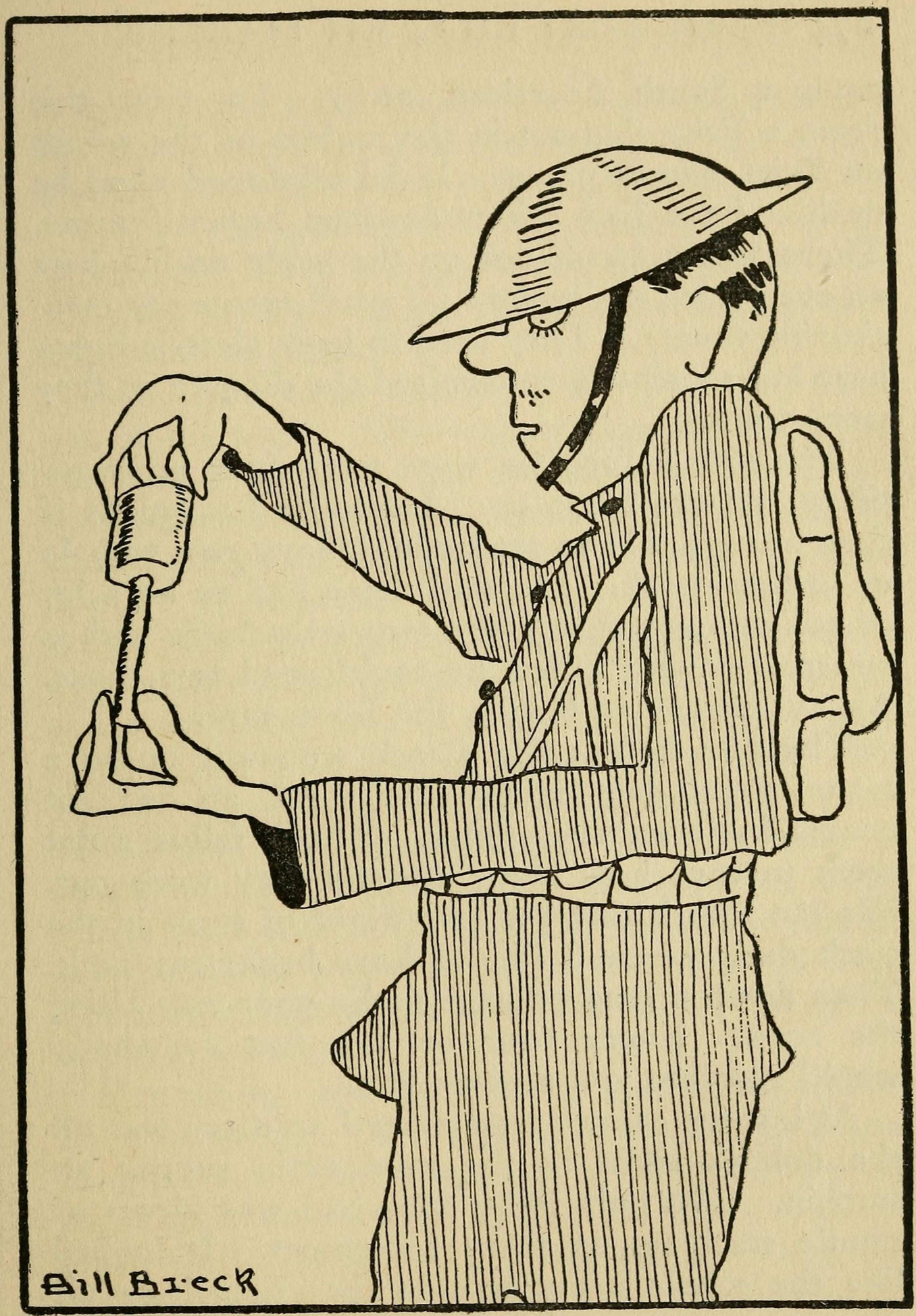
I guess were goin across pretty soon now. Then Ill be able to get a helmet an a looger pistel an a pair of feel glasses. I guess the Fritzes are gettin scared. I hope there not as scared as I am.

yours indefinitely

Bill

Dere Mable:

Since I rote you last I been over the top with the doboys, taken a woods that I cant see why anybody wanted, an collected enuff soovenirs to



"IT DOESNT LOOK AS IF IT HAD EVER EXPLODED"

equip a South American army. Im ritin this from a Fritz dug-out in the middle of the woods on Fritz oficers paper. If Id telefoned ahed he couldnt have had things fixed up better for me. There was a lunch out on the table an blankets an even clean underclose (if youll excuse my menshuning them). They used to have electric lights here but somebody soovenired the dinamo so they wont work.

The nite before we went over four more artilery runners came up. I ast the Lootenant if they was plannin to send any doboys over to help us in the attack. He said there had to be a lot of runners sos that when two went back with a message an got killed he could send two more. Always cheery an bright, the Lootenant.

The nite before the attack we went up to a tunnel thats dug right under a hill an has got rooms in it an everything. Those fellos didnt seem to care how many shovels they wore out. We got into it down a long flight of steps in the pitch dark where I like to have broke my neck. Then down a long passage feelin your way along the road. Every four or five feet somebody would run into you an cuss you.

At last we came round a bend an there was all the doboys sittin in the mud eatin supper an smokin. The only lights they had was pieces of candle stuck up on there equipment. It looked like the whole army was in that tunnel an all

smokin at the same time. The Lootenant told us to make ourselves comfortable then he disappeared into one of the rooms off to the side.

About ten o'clock all the doboys got up an went out. Then we sat in the mud and waited for three hours. Angus found some duck boards and went to sleep.

Some time after midnite a lot of oficers came out of the room. We walked thru the tunnel so far that I figgered that we must be comin out somewhere behind the German lines. At last we climed a flight of stairs an there we were right out doors. Id expected thered be an awful battle goin on by that time but everything was as quiet as church except for a few big ones that would sail over every once in a while. The stars were all out just like it was an ordinary nite. We walked along a lot of paths an fell over a lot of old barb wire, then dropped into a trench. It struck me that was the time to go across while things were quiet. But I heard the doboy Major say that there was only four more hours to wait. These fellos are worse than your family for gettin to places on time.

Everything was quiet for a long time. Then all of a sudden all the guns in the world began bangin away at the same minit. Over the top of the hill behind us an as far as you could see ether way it was just one big flash. Then the shells began racin over, squealin an whisselin an

rumblin along like they was racin each other to see who was goin to get first crack at the Fritzes.

Every one of them seemed to have its own speshul whissel tied onto it. Some of them rumbled along like a fast train hittin a down grade. Some would just sing an hum to themselves sort of quiet an happy while others would go yellin an screamin across like the fire department on an exhibishun run. There was one bunch that squealed like a trolly goin round a turn on dry rails. You sort of felt as if someone ought to grease it.

Besides all these noises over our heads there was the poundin an hammerin behind us from the guns themselves. The big fellos just boom boomed away like a bunch of base drums. Up nearer tho it was like a mountin of giant fire crackers goin off together. Then thered be a let up for a second like a fello thats awful mad but runs out of words. After that theyd go at it agen harder than ever.

The best part of it was that most of them was our own shells. The Fritzes didnt seem to get into the spirit of the thing at all. Every few minutes theyd sail over a big one right near the tunnel where we came out. That was about as safe a place as he could have put em cause there wasnt anybody there.

At first the noise an everything gave a fello something to think about. After a while tho you

got used to it just like you do to Niagra Falls or a steam radiator. Then there wasnt anything to do but get cold an ask about the time. A couple of doboys got tellin each other what kind of a dinner theyd order if they was some place where they wasnt. Whenever you get uncomfortable enuff a couple of fellos like that always show up. I slid down in the bottom of the trench where it was a little warmer an tried to smoke a cigaret under my hand. I must have dropped off to sleep cause the next thing I knew I was all doubled up in the bottom of the trench an half froze. I heard somebody say "Fifteen minites more." The guns was goin it harder than ever. If we hadnt won that scrap wed have had to knock off the war for a couple of months till they got some more amunishun.

Goin over wasnt much. Id read so many things about how you felt just before an just when an just after that I tried to figger just how I did feel. I was so cold I couldnt feel anything tho. I was thinkin about this when somebody says "Snap out of it ahead there. There goin." An there was the Lootenant boostin the Major out of the trench an a lot of doboys with their rifles in there hands hurryin along the top an disappearin in the fog.

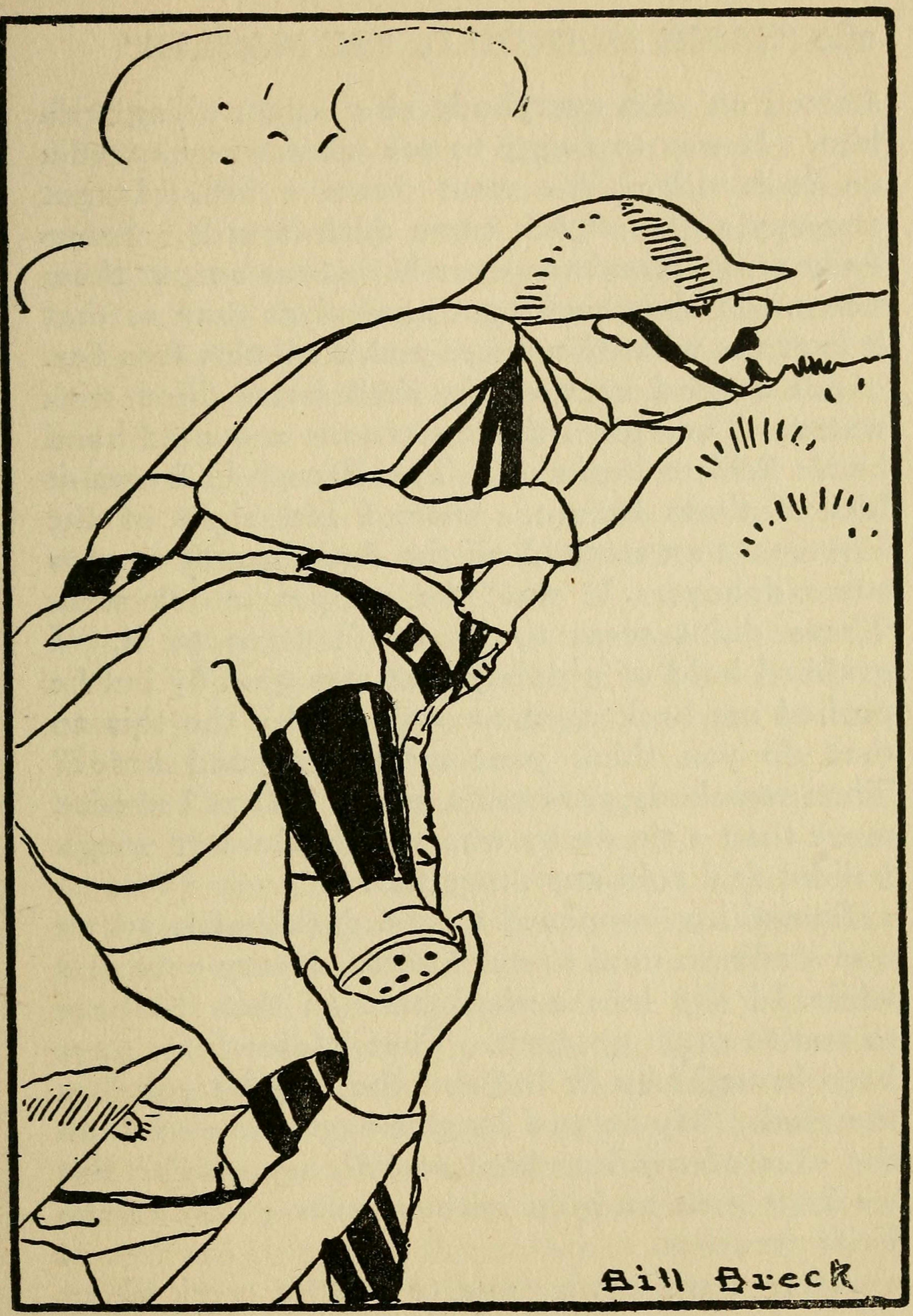
Just as we got out of the trench the worst noise started I ever heard. It made all the shootin that went before sound like a fello drummin on

the table with a couple of knives. Even the machine guns was in it this time. They sounded like a rivitin competishun in a ship yard. I heard somebody say "There goes our machine gun barrage. I hope they get it over our heads." He struck me as a pretty sensible fello.

Somebody had marked the place up with tape like a tennis court. We followed along one of these till we came to another tape runnin the same way as the trenches. There was a lot of doboys lyin down there an a lot of others comin up thru the fog, half runnin, half walkin an all of them stooped over like they was carryin something heavy.

In front it was just fog. We could see red flashes runnin thru it like bubbles in boilin water where the shells from our barrage was bustin. The fog didnt go very high cause you could make out a little blue sky once in a while. Then right thru the top of it came tearin out a regular fourth of July celebrashun of Fritz fireworks. They were just like the rockets at Weewillo Park that spit out long snakes of gold fire like a broom when they bust. The nearer that barrage came to the Fritz trenches the faster they went up all along the line.

We lay there a few minites till everybody came up. The thing that struck me now was that I wasnt scared. Id been more afraid of bein scared than anything else. Then the Major got up an



"THERE WAS THE LOOTENANT BOOSTIN THE MAJOR OUT OF THE TRENCH"

started on with everybody else taggin along with him. It was to foggy to see what was happenin on each side. We went down a hill. It got swampy an we struck some duck boards. Somebody must have been over before us an put them down. If they could get around as easy as that it beat me what they were makin all this fuss for.

All around us was big shell holes filled with water. They gave the Americans a second hand battle field to begin on. The French had used it lots of times before. Once I lost sight of the Lootenant an stepped off the duck boards to pass some doboys. It was like steppin into a well. There didnt seem to be any bottom to it. I grabbed hold of a doboy that was goin by but he pushed me back agen an says "Who the this an that do you think your mawlin around here?" Then somebody gave me a hand. What I needed more than a tin derby was a pair of water wings. I didnt feel cold any more tho.

Something happened to the duckboards an we was wadin in mud to our knees. Every once in a while Id slip into a shell hole an then Id have to run to catch up agen. That Major must have been brought up in Indiana the way he got thru the mud. My rapped leggins began to shrink an the cavs of my legs hurt something awful. But we kept goin an goin without ever gettin to the Fritz trenches.

After a while we came to a little creek about

ten foot wide with bushes along each side. The Major an a couple of the oficers just jumped right in an waded across. It wasnt much over there waste but it looked awful cold an black slippin along thru the fog. The doboys stood for a minit on the bank shivering like a dog when you throw a stick he wants in a pond he knows is cold.

I wish you could have heard the Major cuss. He had a line that would have driven a team of mules without reins or a whip. Naturally havin gotten all wet he couldnt see callin the battle off there. Pretty soon some doboy jumped in right where hed gone over. Then it seemed like the whole army was fightin to get across in that one place. Of course they had the whole creek to pick from but somehow nobody thought of that till everything was all over.

All this time I kept thinkin how we was most across Nobodies land an I wasnt scared yet. I got so cocky about it I stopped to light a cigaret just to show the doboys that a battle or so didnt make no difference to me one way or the other. But we were thru the swamp now an my legs hurt agen. We came to a road runnin right down the middle of Nobodies Land. The Major stopped here an sent out fellos to see where the rest of the outfit was. The fog was still so thick you couldnt see nothin an you couldnt hear nothin of course on acount of the racket.

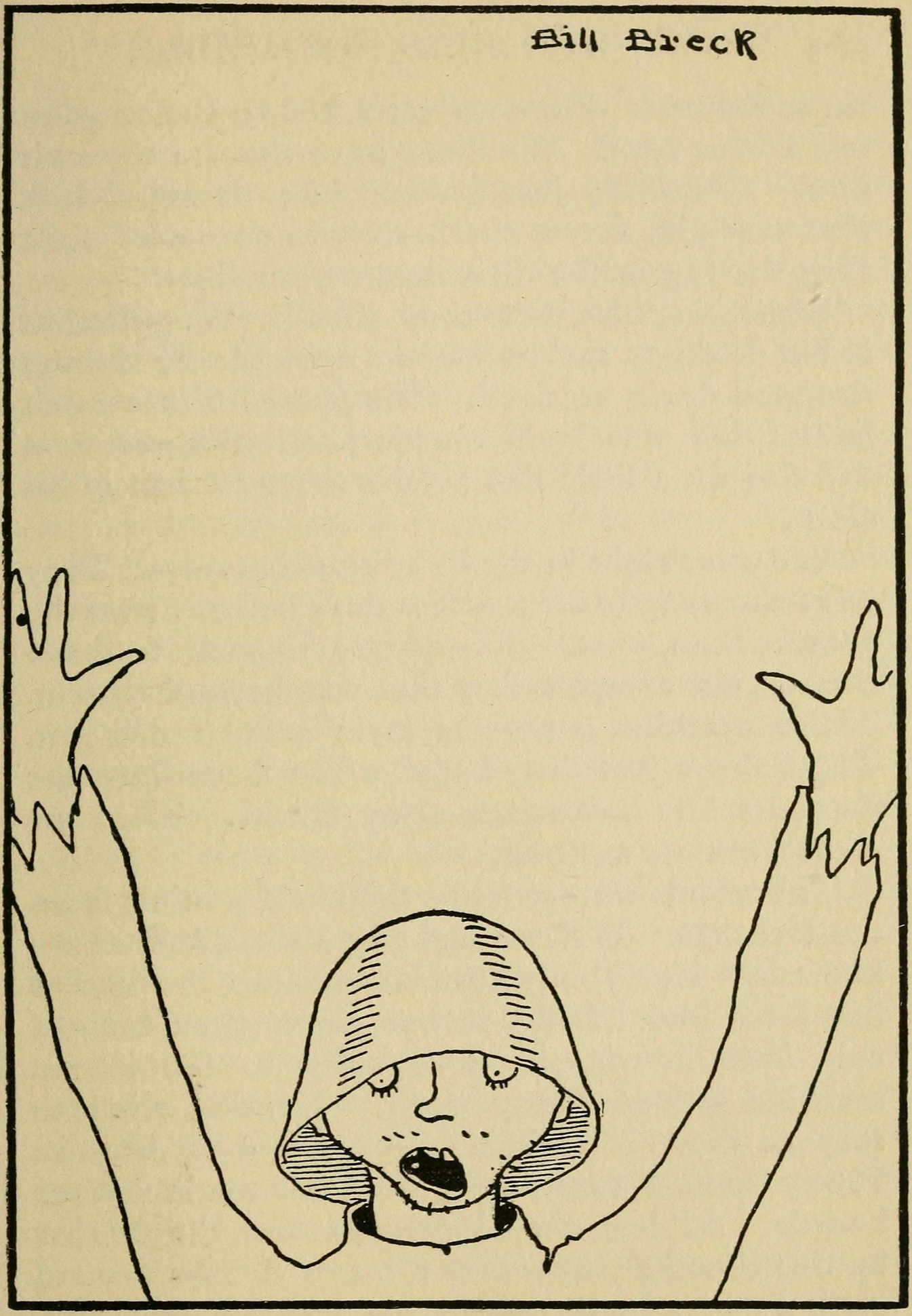
All of a sudden a flock of machine guns got

under way at the same time. There was a noise all around like a bunch of fellos whisselin thru there teeth. Everyone dropped down in the grass. I lay so close to the ground I bet I was a foot wider than usual. Then I knew the reason I hadnt been scared before was because nobodied been firin at us till now. Fightin is good fun, Mable, as long as the bullets are all goin the same way as you are. I dropped my cigaret when I flopped down. Now I could smell it burnin a hole thru my coat. I wouldnt have raised up enuff to pull it out tho if it had burned a hole right thru me.

As soon as the whisselin let up a little the Major jumped up an says how he didnt know where the rest of the army was but we wasnt goin to lie there an rot. I didnt feel as if I was goin to rot for quite a while but I didnt like to get left behind so I tagged along. We passed two or three of our fellos that was done in. Then a bunch of barb wire with a couple of doboys workin like hell with wire clippers. Our shells had busted it up pretty good but there was an awful lot to bust.

Just as we got thru the wire somebody says "Look out." A Fritz was runnin toward us thru the fog. His hands was floppin over his head kind of loose an he was makin the queerest noises I ever heard. The way I imagine a sheep would if youd kicked it.

His helmet was so big it looked more like a



"HIS HELMET LOOKED LIKE A TIN SUNBONNET"

tin sunbonnet. He was just a kid an the scardest one I ever seen. We didnt have time to soovenir him. Somebody just planted him an awful kick that sent him across the barb wire an out of sight thru the fog in the direcshun of our lines.

Something else moved up ahead. We yelled at it but it didnt say nothin so a couple of doboys dropped down an fired. We passed him a minit later. He was layin on his back with one arm still floppin a little like a fello thats restless in his sleep.

We were right in the Fritz trenches now. They were the ones Id seen a few days before from the observashun post. Everybody seemed to have cleared out except a few that was beyond clearin. There machine guns was layin around still hot. The doboys just distributed a few bums into the dug-outs like salvashun army tracks. Then we climed out an went on.

The woods werent more than half a minit from the trenches. We ran right into them before we knew it. Everybody just busted into the bushes but I tell you Mable, it was worse than takin a cold bath in winter. I expected to fall into a machine gun nest any minit. Nobody tried to stop us tho. It looked as tho theyd all beat it. Pretty soon I came to a road all made out of boards. Id lost the Lootenant and the Major by this time but there was a lot of doboys around an it looked as tho the show was all over any-

way. Just as we stepped out on the road about a dozen Fritzes came runnin down with there hands floppin over there heads an blattin like the first one had. Some doboy made a pass at one of them with a bayonet just for fun. He started to whine like a kid. No matter how scared I ever get Mable Ill never be as scared as these Fritzes an thats sayin a goodeel.

Things seemed pretty well over so I stopped to help the doboys soovenir this bunch. I just took a few buttons an a helmet offen one. He had red hair. Most of them wanted us to take everything they had. Then I started up the road to see if I could find the Lootenant an the Major an a looger pistel. There was a bunch of us all together. I don't know just how it happened but I guess there must have been a machine gun planted at a bend in the road just ahead of us. It cut loose as soon as the last prisoner had started for the rear. I could hear those old pills whisselin thru there teeth at me as they went past. A couple of the doboys dropped without lettin out a sound an I made a move that would have deceived the quickest eye. I never saw a road cleared so quick in my life. An there I lay beside the board road, Mable, lissenin to the machine gun bullets playin she loves me she loves me not with the daisies over my head.

I hated to lose that helmet havin taken it off the Fritz myself an he havin red hair an the like.

So I slipped it into an openin under the road. Then I noticed everybody else crawlin away thru the bushes so I crawled after them havin nothin else to do.

After Id crawled till it seemed like I must be pretty near out of the woods an the knees of my trousers I stood up. When I looked around for the doboys there wasnt any. All I could hear was rivitin machines an shells bustin all around me. An the bullets was criss-crossin thru the bushes like a bunch of draggin flies. It seemed like a useless place for an artilery fello to be in.

Well, Mable, Im goin to quit now cause one of the doboy runners is goin back an I want to give him this letter. I am enclosin some mud I picked up in Nobodies Land. It may help to give you some idear of the country.

Yours to the last Fritz

Bill

Dere Mable:

I never thought Id be ritin such long letters that Id have to be gettin them off my chest on the instalment plan. Ive sharpened my pencil so ofen there aint hardly enuff left to hang onto. There shellin the woods today. Every time one lands anywhere near the dug out something seems to break the point.

Well, Mable, in my last letter I left myself standin all alone in the middle of the woods lis-

senin to a lot of things flyin round my head that arent in no bird book. I was beginnin to think wether, havin lost the Lootenant an the Major, I hadnt ought to go back to my battery. Duty before plesure. Thats me all over, Mable. Just then I heard someone comin thru the woods.

That was the worst minit of my life except once when I had to make a speech in High School. I decided if it was goin to be my last Id spend it as private as I could so I stepped behind a bush. Whoever was comin seemed to have the spring halt. Hed come a little way. Then hed stop. Then hed come a little. I couldnt figger where I had any call to act as a Fritz recepshun comittee so I started to crawl away. Just as I stuck my head around the bush I saw something that made me lie down agen so hard I bet the ground is still stamped with the eagels on my buttons. It was only the end of a shoe passin thru the brush about fifteen feet away. There are times tho when an old shoe can look worse than your granfathers gost sittin on the end of your bed makin faces at you.

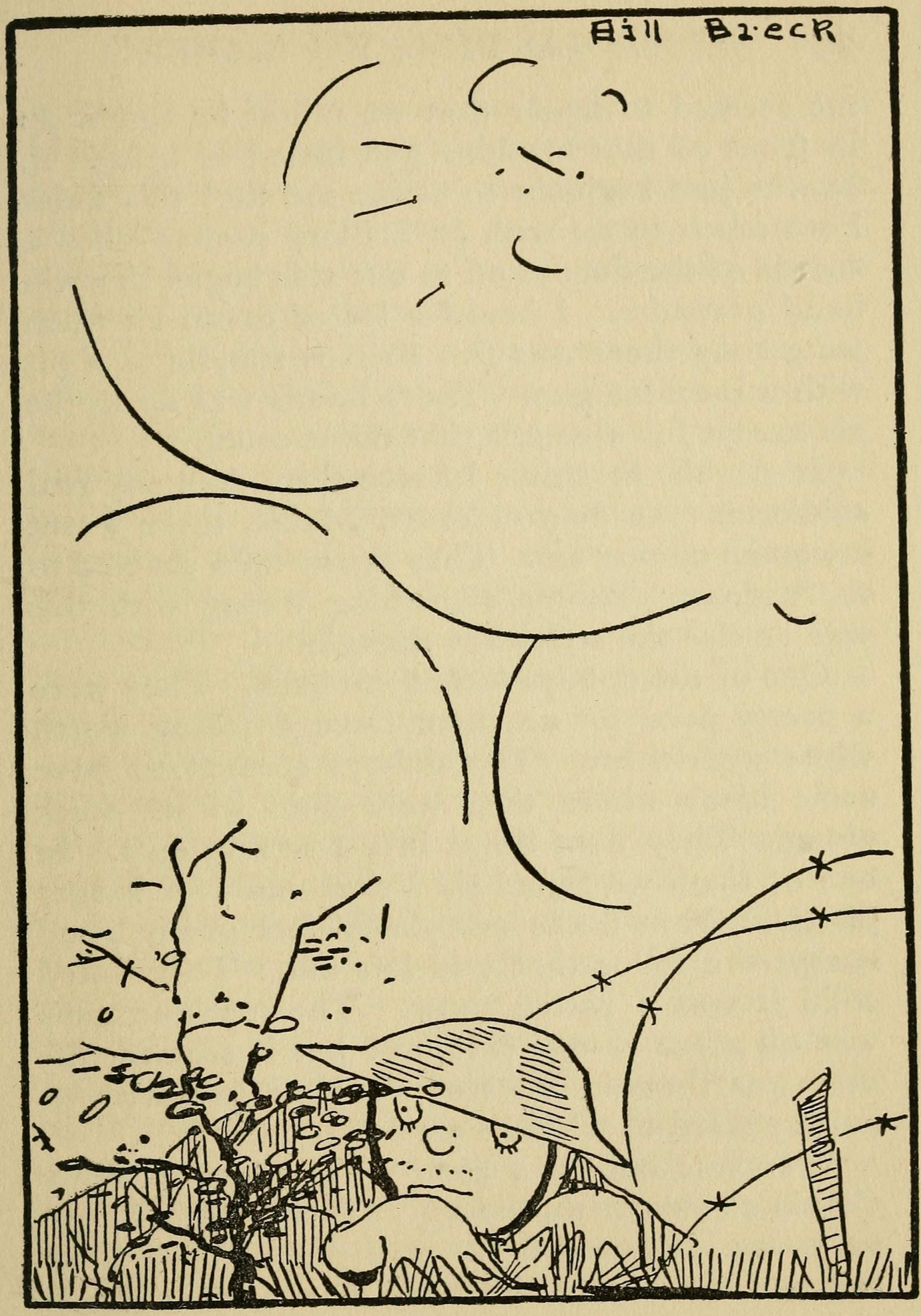
I lay there for what seemed like a couple of days. I didnt dare roll over on my back for fear of makin a noise an I didnt dare stay on my face for fear of somebody makin a pincushun out of me while I wasnt lookin. I was tryin to think out some way of not doin ether when the queerest noise you ever heard started on the other side of

the bush. It was like water comin back into a facet after its been shut off for a while. I could feel my tin derby pull right up offen my head. The noise kept gettin loud an ended up with a sneeze. You couldnt have lifted me higher with a shell. I never was gladder tho to hear a sneeze cause I knew who that belonged to. I could have told it blindfolded in a milyun.

I was so glad to find Angus I forgot he didnt know I was there an ran around the bush. He was lying in a bunch of briars all red in the face from trying to hold in. When he heard me comin he threw up both hands. Then when he saw who it was he tried to make out he was stretchin.

Angus said hed been crawlin around the woods tryin to find somebody till he saw me duck behind a bush. Hed been layin there ever since tryin to decide wether to shoot me an take a chance on missin or lay there till I died a natshural death. It was easy to see tho that we wouldnt win anything but a wooden cross hangin round there so we walked thru the woods till we ran into about twenty doboys. One of them said they was after a machine gun nest that was holdin things up. Even that was better than snoopin around alone an we followed along like a couple of dogs after a parade.

Well, Mable, the doboys is ether awful brave or awful stupid. They might have been after birds nests the way they went at it. Nobody but



"I STUCK MY HEAD AROUND THE BUSH"

me seemed to figger that we might be comin up in front of that machine gun insted of behind it. It was just beginnin to strike me that this didnt have much to do with an artilery runner when a couple of the doboys off to one side began throwin hand grenades. I heard a lot of cussin an when we got up there was five Fritzes standin in a pit with a machine gun. There hands was up in the air except for a couple that didnt count.

It was the first time Id seen them doin any real soldierin. An do you know, Mable, there wasnt a woman among em. They wasnt even chained to there guns. Theres something wrong with this war or else the styles are changin.

One of the doboys took them back. They were a pretty poor lot an didnt have anything worth while with them. The doboys seemed to have some idear where they were goin so we stuck along. They went down in a few dug outs. In one of them we found six Fritzes an four looger pistels. That made everybody feel pretty good except the fellos that was left out. They voted solid it was a rotten show. The machine guns was off more to one side now but it seemed like they was throwin a lot of shells around without much regard to where we was.

We came out on a road an ran into a doboy Captin an two or three men. Havin nothin better to do we followed him. He turned up a little railroad track like the one that used to run

around the county fair for a dime. It twisted along thru the woods without seemin to come out much of anyplace. Then we came round a bend an about fifty yards away was a gang of Fritzes stokin shells into four whoppin big guns as fast as they could fire them out.

The next thing I knew I was runnin down that little track behind the Captin. Quite a ways behind, Mable. Everybody was cussin like a mule-skinner. Angus was sayin things in Skotch I bet hed hate to have rote down as his last words. But the Fritzes didnt seem to have no idear of makin them that. They stopped for one look an dove in the bushes like a bunch of rabbits. All except a few that was to scared to run. They just stood an gobbled at us.

It seemed to me wed done something worth sittin around an havin a postmortem about. But the Captin just rote the name of his company on one of the guns with a piece of chalk. Then he lit his pipe an started off down the track agen. We came out on a road after a while an there was the Major an a whole lot of doboys. The doboys was sittin on the railroad track, smokin cigarets an watchin the shells bust in the woods all around them like they was at a baseball game. A squad of Fritzes was puttin a few of our doboys on stretchers an carryin them off down the road.

Well, Mable, there aint much more to tell. The Major sent me over to a tin house where the

Lootenant was. I found him dryin off by an old Fritz stove an eatin somebodies Irun Rashuns. I never could find out when the battle was offishully over. There was machine guns poppin away all the afternoon but nobody seemed to be botherin much about them. I guess they just got sick of it an quit. Anyway they were gone by night.

Now were lyin around takin it easy. We fire at the Fritzes all day an they fire back at us. They havnt interfered with my meals yet tho so let them go to it. Every dug out has been turned inside out. I guess the Fritzes dont get charged for losin equipment like we do. From the amount of stuff we found they must get pretty near undressed before they run away.

Ive just been figgerin up the total victory with Angus. We got five loogers, two pair of feel glasses (one broke), a gold watch that can be fixed, three pocket fulls of buttons, a lot of letters we cant read an four belts. As for helmets an gas masks an the like all you got to do is reach your hand out the dug out door. If we could only soovenir a Ford truck to carry all this stuff wed be fixed.

Im goin to quit now an get some sleep. Angus says lay up all you can while you have a chance. Hes laid up enuff to last him the rest of his life since Ive known him.

Yours as long as it lasts

Bill

Dere Mable:

Ive heard so many shells floatin over this old wood in the last week that they dont mean much more to me now than the postmans whissel. Only I hope I dont ever hear one stop an turn in here cause I aint hankerin to be evakuated like a pictur puzzle.

Im sleepin with the doboy runners. If you want to know anything about the war thats the place to live.

Yesterday the Lootenant called me over to his dug out an said he was goin to establish a couple of observashun posts. I thanked him an said Id seen all I wanted to so if it was the same to him Id stay in an keep my eye on the soovenirs. As soon as he saw I had something else to do hed have dragged me out if Id only had one leg to walk on.

The Lootenant loaded everything he could think of onto my back. I wouldnt have been surprised if hed ended up by climin on himself. If you could win this war with telescopes an things it would have been over three days after he got into it. We went to a place where the Dutch had built a platform way up in a tree on the edge of the woods. The Lootenant an a doboy oficer climed up. They was up there so long we thought theyd probably found an old machine gun nest an gone to sleep in it.

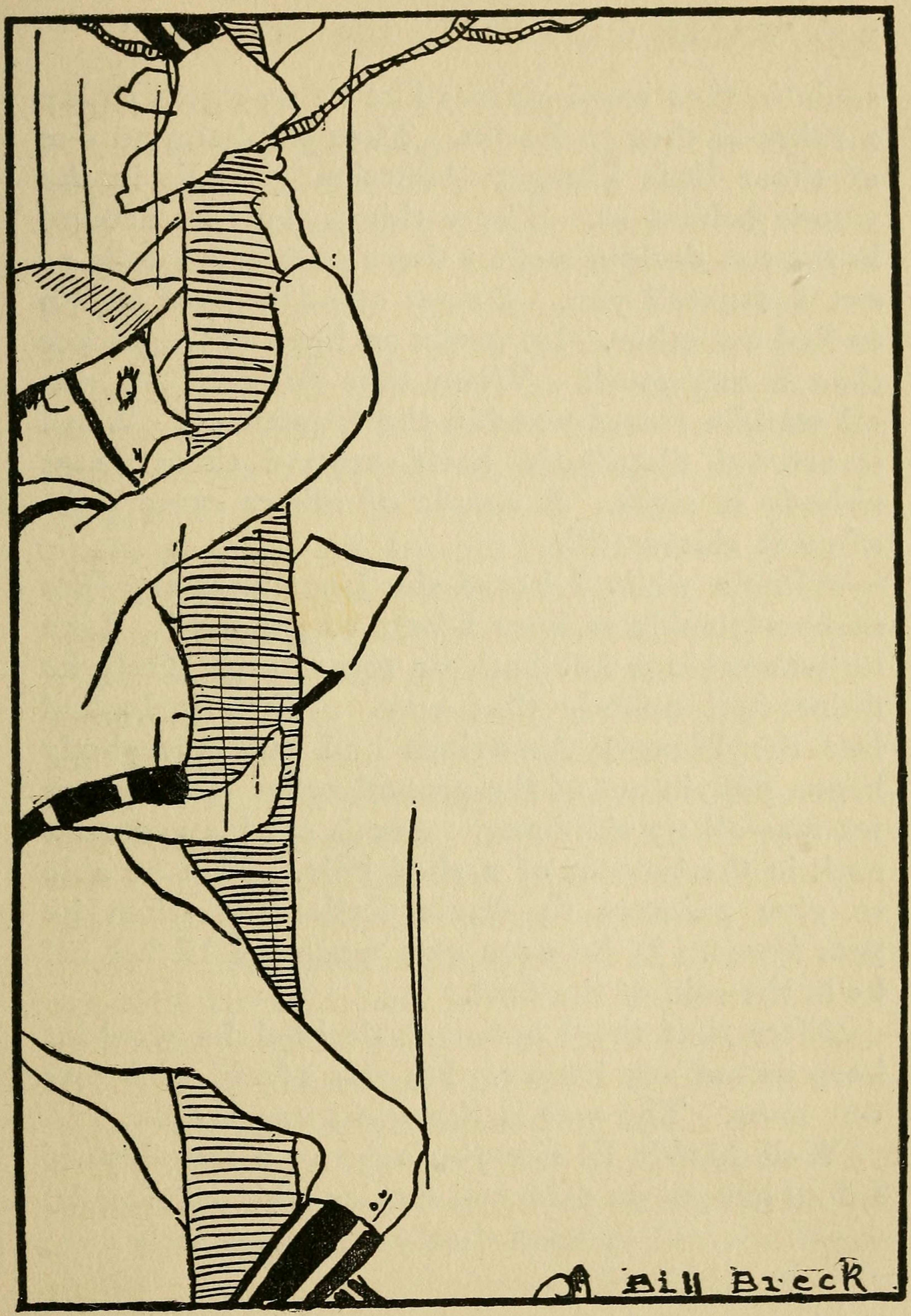
While we was sittin under the tree plannin how

wed improve the army if it was ours we heard an airyplane comin. You could tell by the noise it was flyin low. We figgered if it was a Dutch plane the Lootenants was up a tree more ways than one cause they stuck up above the rest of the woods like a sore thum. Pretty soon we could see it thru the branches an sure enuff there was the irun cross painted on the bottom. It came up to the tree an circled round it. Then it opened up its machine gun at it an flew away with a trail of yellow smoke comin out its hind end.

You ought to have seen those two Lootenants come down. They beat every law of gravity old man Newton ever passed. The Lootenant said theyd fixed that observashun post all right an now he was goin to put up another one on the other side of the woods. He thought this next one would be better on the ground.

The next place we stopped was a little clearin on the side of a hill. You could look right across the Moose river an see where our shells was landin in a grave yard right near a Fritz town. Some of these fellos certinly is there. The Fritzes was gettin back at us by shellin our doboys near where we was workin. Thats the way they do. When we shell the Fritz doboys they come right back at us an shell ours. Its a case of you kick my dog an Ill kick yours. Thats a nice arrangement for everybody but the doboys.

The Lootenant set up a little table an began



"YOU OUGHT TO HAVE SEEN THOSE TWO LOOTENANTS COME DOWN"

squintin thru some glasses like he was goin to lay a railroad thru to Berlin. Then shh-bang an one of those little Hungry Awstrian guns lit in the woods behind us. Those things dont lie around in the sun decidin wether there goin to be duds or not I can tell you. I dont stand around waitin to find out ether. Im gettin so I can drop quicker than a war stock. When that thing lit we was all standin round watchin the Lootenant. When it started distributin itself around there wasnt nobody in sight. A couple of others came right after it closer still.

After a while I heard the Lootenant say "Its so comfortable in here I hate to get out." Like he was takin a hot bath or something. Only he didnt fool nobody that way. When it looked like the Hungry Awstrians had quit everybody began poppin out of the ground agen. As soon as we was all up shh-bang. Angus cut his eye on a rock in the bottom of a shell hole. Hell be able to give pointers to Annie Kellerman when he gets home. If he ever gets wounded Ill bet itll be in the sole of the foot.

After that the Lootenant decided he wouldnt keep us out any longer. He was afraid wed miss our mess. The war is changin some people.

Well Mable Ill rite you agen in a few days if I dont get put on detached service with the Angels.

until then yours exclusively

Bill

Dere Mable:

I suppose you thought I was dead for the last two weeks. You was so near to right a couple of times I wanted to get something definite on it before I rote you. I been havin newmonya now in the hospittle for ten days. I havnt been so sore since I had the mumps Crismus vacashun. After duckin half the shells the Croup people ever turned out I had to get hit with a cold in the head. I bet I get the chicken pox on my honeymoon.

An now here I am holdin down an irun cot that creeks when you turn over, missin all the fun an not even goin to get a wound stripe. The worst of it they tell me I got as much chance of gettin back to my battery as I havin of catchin the Croun Prince. They say like as not Ill land in some Steva Dora regiment in the SOS or in the M.P.s. They dont seem to have nothin to do in this army but take you from where you want to be an put you where you dont.

But I aint goin to complain, Mable. I told em that after Id been here four days. All I say is if they dont let me out of this hole toot sweet Im goin to get up an beat it an die on the road. Then perhaps theyll wish they had.

Theres not a blessed thing to do but wait for mess an lissen to the fello lie in the next bed. He can make Annie Nias look like Martha Washington before hes been talkin five minites. He

says that when he got hit the shells was fallin around him so fast that the only way he saved his life was by deflectin them off with a bayonet. Two of them came at him at once an he got mixed up. I ast him why he didnt catch one on the back of his neck like the fello does the cannon balls in the vawdeville show. The nurse told me yesterday he got his foot run over by a truck. Everybody spends there time tellin how they used to shake dice with death every mornin before breakfast. It works out all right cause nobody believes anybody else an it gives them good practice for when they go home.

Its a funny thing about the fello in the next bed. I came in two days after he did. Four days after he got here he came down with newmonya. I got it two days later. He died last night. But of course that dont necesarily mean nothin. Cheerful an bright to the last gasp. Thats me all over, Mable. Of course I dont want you to worry cause that would make me worry an theres no tellin what that would bring on.

Well, Mable, I got a big surprise for you. I guess itll take a load offen your mind. You know all that stuff we been readin in the war stories about hospittles an the like. It all goes the same. "The next thing the fello knew he was lyin between snowy white sheets an a butiful vizun was bendin over him. She had vilet eyes an was full of tears like shed been cryin or something. An

she smooths out his pillo an says 'Your better now.' " That smoothin out the pillo always seems to cure em. Well, Mable, Im sorry to say thats all bunk—every word of it.

When I first heard they were goin to send me to a hospittle behind the lines I didnt care a bit. I wanted to have a look at a vilet eyed nurse. Accordin to the books they usuly turn out to be Dutcheses or somebody. I was plannin to look up in her eyes an say "This must be heven. Do you happen to have any lemonade?" Or something mushy like that. Then shed cry some more an like as not put a stick in the lemonade.

Of course I wouldnt have married her or nothin. In the first place all the churches over here is knocked down an besides I got other plans if I ever get a chance between wars.

The thing started off all wrong by my not bein unconshus when they brought me in. I didnt even ride in on a stretcher. I was a sittin case. They walk. Before I could get into the place at all I had to report to a sargent. He ast me so many questions I thought I must have struck some recruitin stashun an might be enlistin agen. I pretty near had heart failure for a minit. The sargent told me report to Ward 19. You never go anywhere in the army. You report. Theyd have a fello in his coffin report to his grave if they could.

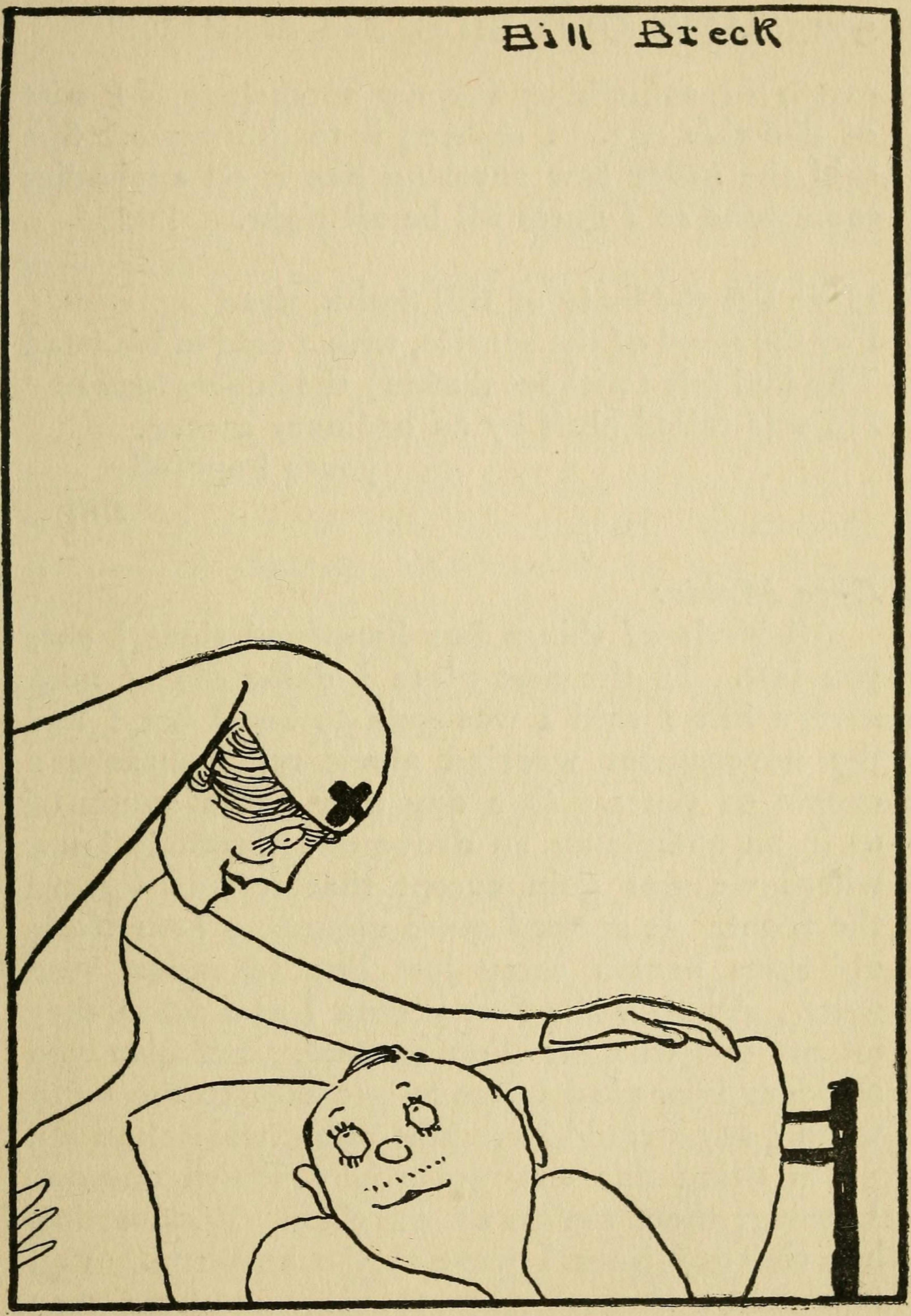
When they built Ward 19 they took all the joy

out of it by makin it look like a barracks. Insted of a vilet eyed nurse there was a bleary eyed Captin sittin in a little room in front. He didnt look as if hed been to bed since the war started. I says "Sir, Private Smith reports to be sick in Ward 19." Nobody cried or looked at me with tears in there eyes. The Captin just says "What the this an that is the matter with those fellos up there do they think this is the only hospittle in France? Lets see your card."

He called an orderly who showed me an empty bed where I was to be sick. Then he says "If you want anything to eat you better get your close off." Just like a fello couldnt eat right with his close on. An he says "You dont have to set your dirty shoes on the blankets nether."

After Id got into bed the nurse came along to take my temperment. I aint goin to say nothin agenst that nurse tho. She was all right an it wasnt her falt she didnt have vilet eyes. As for cryin, Mable, she was too busy to have shed a tear if you shoved a peck of onyuns under her nose. I never saw anybody work so hard. Shed make a good wife for the Top sargent. It would make him happy to sit around an watch her.

Well, Mable, if you dont get another letter from me youll probably get one from the local congressman explainin why. If the worst come to worst tell your father I didnt bear no grudge agenst him. I was thinkin yesterday about a little



" 'DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ANY LEMONADE?' ".

motto or something for my toomstone. I sort of like this one. I showed it to the nurse. She said she never saw anything like it on anybodies toomstone so I guess itll be all right.

Here lies the body of Bill Smith, dead
For the good of the service, with a cold in his head
Tho hed felt (without duckin) the bullets breeze
He was called aloft by an ordinary sneeze.

yours hopefully
Bill

Dere Mable:

All kinds of things has happened since I rote you last. In the first place I didnt die of new-monya like I said I was goin to but I bet I had the government worried about my insurance a couple of times. One day they put a bunch of us in an ambulance an drove off. Nobody knew where we was goin except that it was toward the front. It seemed good almost to hear those old guns bangin away just like Id never been gone. An then the first person I saw when they let me out was the Top sargent. Itll give you an idear how glad I was to get back to the outfit when I say I could have kised him, whissel an all.

Im riting this way down in a Dutch dug-out. Upstairs there shellin all the time. War certinly has changed since I went to the hospittle. You take more chances goin to mess up here than

you did goin over the top when this all started. In half an hour, I got to go on gas gard. That means I stand in front of the dug out an when I smell something I blow a klaxon. If any old Ford ever sneaks up behind me when I get home an blows a klaxon theyll probably see me clap my derby over my face an dive into a coal hole.

Theyve thrown so much gas at us lately that its gettin on the mens nerves as well as there close. Most of the fellos would yell gas if you threw a pot of geraniums into the dugout. Somebody stepped on Anguses hand while he was asleep yesterday an he put some iodine on it. He woke up in the middle of the night an smelt it. He had us wearin our gas masks pretty near the rest of the night. But we——

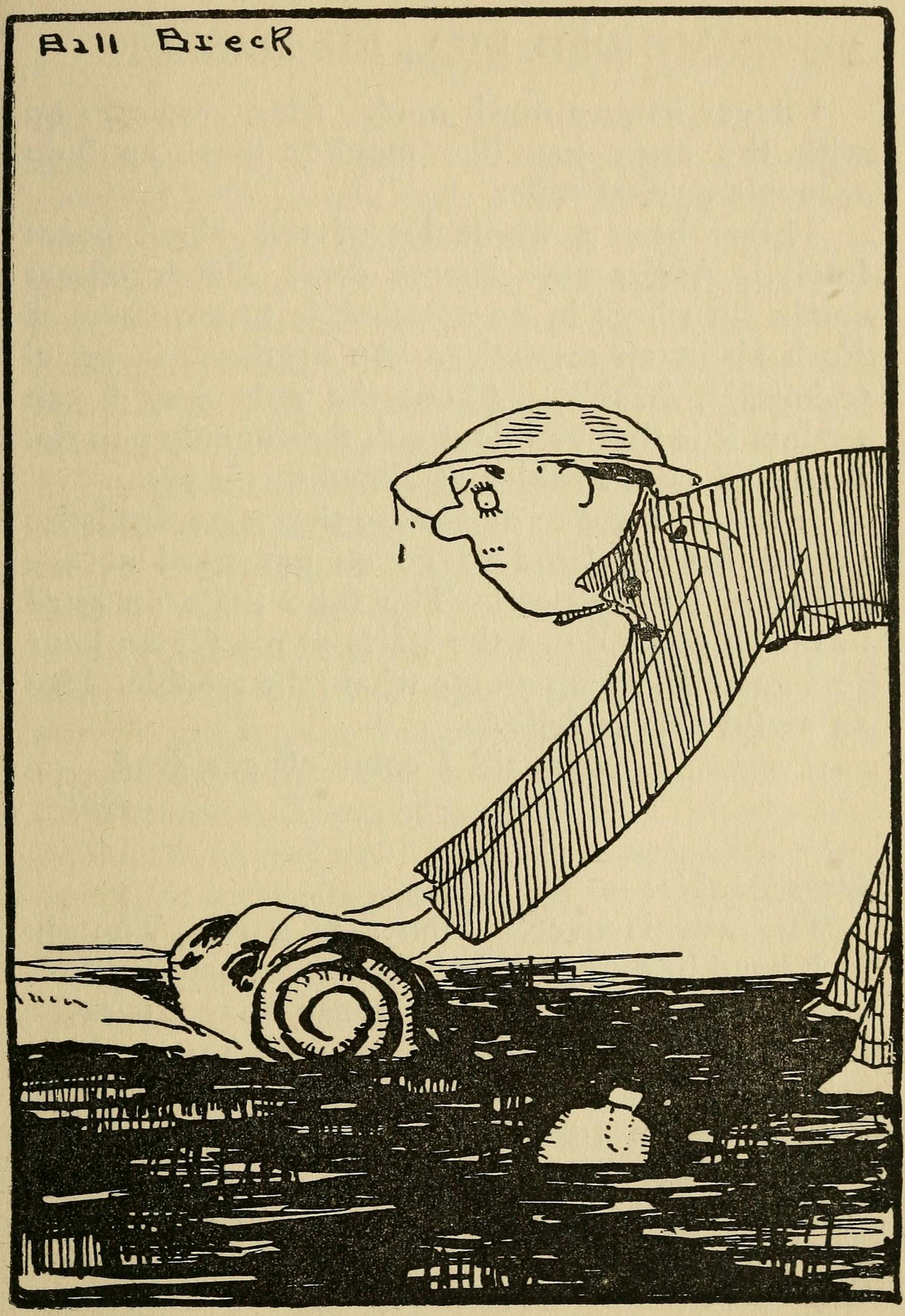
Ive forgot what I was goin to say there. I bet Ive got gray hairs since I rote that last line. Just as I got to the "we" I heard the old klaxon squawk. When I felt around my chest for my gas mask it wasnt there. It was worse than findin yourself on the street car without a nickel on the way to your own weddin. I sat there wonderin how long I could hold my breth till I almost busted a lung. Then I remembered it was on my knee under the letter where Id been usin it for a ritin desk. Theyd have sent me back to the States as gas instructor if they could have seen me put on that mask. Chained lightenin. Thats me all over, Mable.

All we do nowdays is move. Back in the States it used to take us 24 hours to get ready for a hike. Now were lucky if we get 24 minits. We expect anything an we havnt been disappointed so far. Like the other nite when we were on our way to this place. It was rainin as usual. Wed pitched pup tents in the woods an had just gotten to sleep. Angus an I was bunkin together on some hay that hed pulled of a forage wagon that was caught in a jam. We was lissenin to the rain an sayin how lucky we was not to be out in it. That is nothin but our feet an there always wet so they dont count. Its funny how different rain sounds beatin on the sides of a pup tent an on a tin derby.

I went to sleep an dreamed I was on a train just pullin into Philopolis. I looked out the windo an saw your father on the platform with a whissel in his mouth. He was blowin it an dancin around like a mad monkey. Then I woke up an the Top was standin outside blowin on his whissel like he was tryin to blow the pea out of it an sayin "Fall in. Harness an hitch."

Well, Mable, to say that bunch was sore was like callin Niagra Falls pretty. I dont supose you ever tried to make a blanket roll in the pitch dark an six inches of mud. It comes out like a jelly roll only mud insted of jelly.

About midnight the Top came from somewhere an says "Unhitch an unharness. Put up your pup tents. We aint agoin to move."



"TRIED TO MAKE A BLANKET ROLL IN SIX INCHES OF MUD"

I never saw so much mud. Mud seems to go with the army just like monkey meat an Top sargents an first calls.

Theres been a whole lot of talk about peace lately. Angus says theres some Dutch oficers comin thru here in an automobile to see General Fosh about an armistice. An armistice is awful tecknickle, Mable. About the only way I can explain it is that you dont quit fightin only you do. I may be eatin gobbler at Thanksgivin yet.

Just now I got to quit cause theres no armistice yet an Im supposed to go on gas gard at five o'clock. Its six now. The fello thats on gard has been yellin down the stairs at me fer an hour so I guess Ill go up an see whats the trouble. Hes an awful nervus fello.

yours till I come off gas gard

Bill

Dere Mable:

The war is over. Finney le gare. The six inch head lines lost their job at leven oclock Monday mornin. Its so quiet you can almost hear it. It sure will be a come down when we have to look at picturs in the Sunday papers of the Prince of Whales visitin a tooth pick factory an the flower show at Passadinner.

It wasnt much of an endin to a worlds champeenship scrap. Id always thought that when they ended wars like this they lined up same as in

the pictur your father has of whats his name surrenderin to thingumbob at Yorktown. I thought General Fosh would come ridin out on a big white horse an General Hinderberg on a big black one. Hed hand Fosh his sord or whissel or whatever it is that Generals carry nowdays. Then everybody would cheer, the bands would bust out with the Star Spangled Banner an it would be just like after the fello rides a bicicle over five elefants in the circus. After that wed hand our guns over to some museum an go home. Somehow or other it was to big to peter out the way it did.

We fired off an on Sunday night an then quit when it got daylight. Most of the fellos were down in the dug outs catchin a little sleep except for the gards an a few others that was monkeyin around upstairs. Me an Angus was sittin in a little trench in front of the first gun. Angus was cleanin his revolver. I might have known from that that something out of the way was goin to happen.

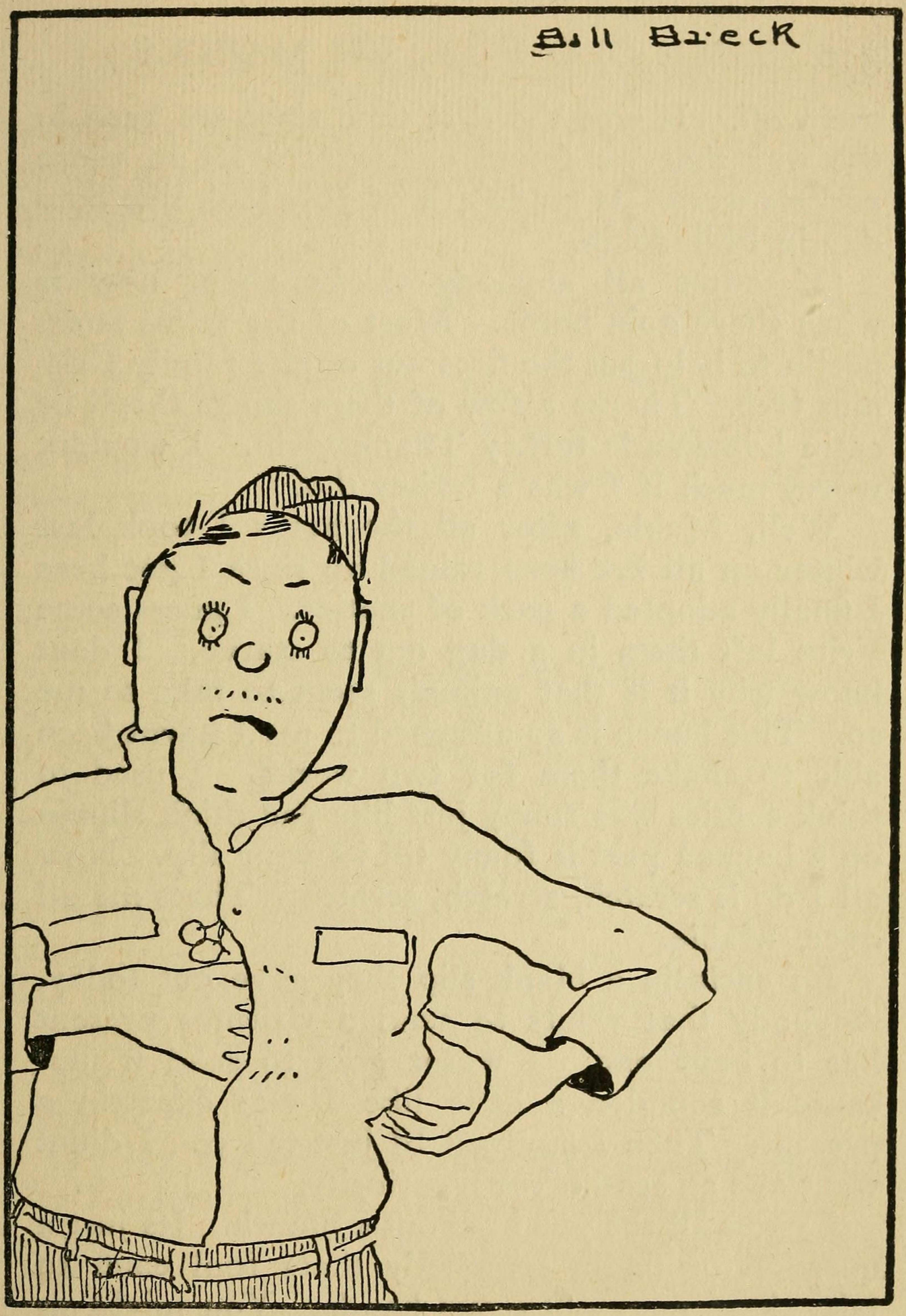
The Fritzes was sowin a big field in front of the battery with wash boilers. Theyd been at it all mornin but about the only thing they was killen was the grass. Not bein interested in the hay crop we wasnt callin them up to tell them about it. Every ten minites or so you could feel a big one land. Then wed stick our heads up over the top of the trench an watch it throw up mud in the air like Old Faithless guyser.

We was talkin about the armistice. Angus said if it was sined up we was to go to college in Ingland for six months or else to Rusha to fight the Slovo Checkracks or the Checko Swaybacks or somebody. Not wantin to do ether I couldnt see where the armistice was goin to do me much good.

Just then I saw the Top comin but it was to late to go anywhere. He says "I want you fellos to go an help unload a rashun truck thats stuck in the mud down the road. An by the way, the wars over in about five minits so dont go around shootin anybody after that unless you want to land in the gard house." I bet if the angel Gabriul stuck his head out of a cloud an said the world was goin to end in twenty minits all that would worry the Top would be thinkin up details to keep us sweatin that long.

Thats about all there was to the end of the war as far as I was concerned. Angus says "Ill be damed." Then he squinted thru his gun an handed it over to me an says "See if you think thats rust up near the front end." We stopped everybody that came along an told them about it. Most of them would just say "Ill be damed." Then theyd stand around for a minit thinkin it over an ask "When are we goin home?" Youd think me an Angus was runnin some kind of a Cooks toor.

Things warmed up a little after it got dark. Everybody got there fireworks out an touched



"ALL I DO IS SCRATCH, SCRATCH, SCRATCH"

them off. It was the first time since we been in the war that we found out what a lot of those rockets were. It made 4th of July look like Sunday in Philadelfia.

Of course all anybody thinks about now is when there goin home. Most of the fellos is expectin to help put the fires out on the family Crismus tree. Theres a few of them thinks theyll be eatin homemade turkey Thanksgivin. I wouldnt worry much if I was a turkey tho.

Well, Mable, after all the baths I took last winter an all Ive been rained on since I got here I finally adopted a pack of cooties. I guess some Fritz left them in a dug out to starve. I dont know why it is that animals seem to take to me so. This bunch is so attached to me I havnt been able to shake them for two weeks. I used to think cooties was funny just like you think slippin on a banana peel is funny till its your slip. Now all I do is scratch, scratch, scratch. Thats me all over, Mable.

Im enclosin a blank slip they gave out today. Anybody that wants to send a Crismus present has to have one. I wasnt goin to send it first cause it sounded a little like I was expectin a present. Then I figgered Id just tell you I didnt want one an send it for a curiosity.

I guess Ill see you in about a month. Its just a question of findin somebody thats fool enuff to take these guns offen our hands. You might as

well start oilin the victrola. You can tell your father hes goin to sit down to the biggest dinner he ever tackeled the first Sunday after I get home, liver or no liver.

till then as always

Bill

P. S. Im sendin half a dozen of those slips extra in case the first one should get lost or some of your friends wanted to send anything to somebody over here.

Dere Mable:

You couldnt guess where I am now. Im not to sure myself. All I know is it isnt the way home. A couple of days after the armistice was signed we pulled the guns into what was left of a town. The Fritzes had just moved out. Then the Captin told us there was an army goin into Germany an we was to be part of it. It struck me as a pretty low trick when wed told the Fritzes we was thru fightin to go right on pickin on them. He said it was an honer. Im always leary of that. In the army honer an hard work are the same thing.

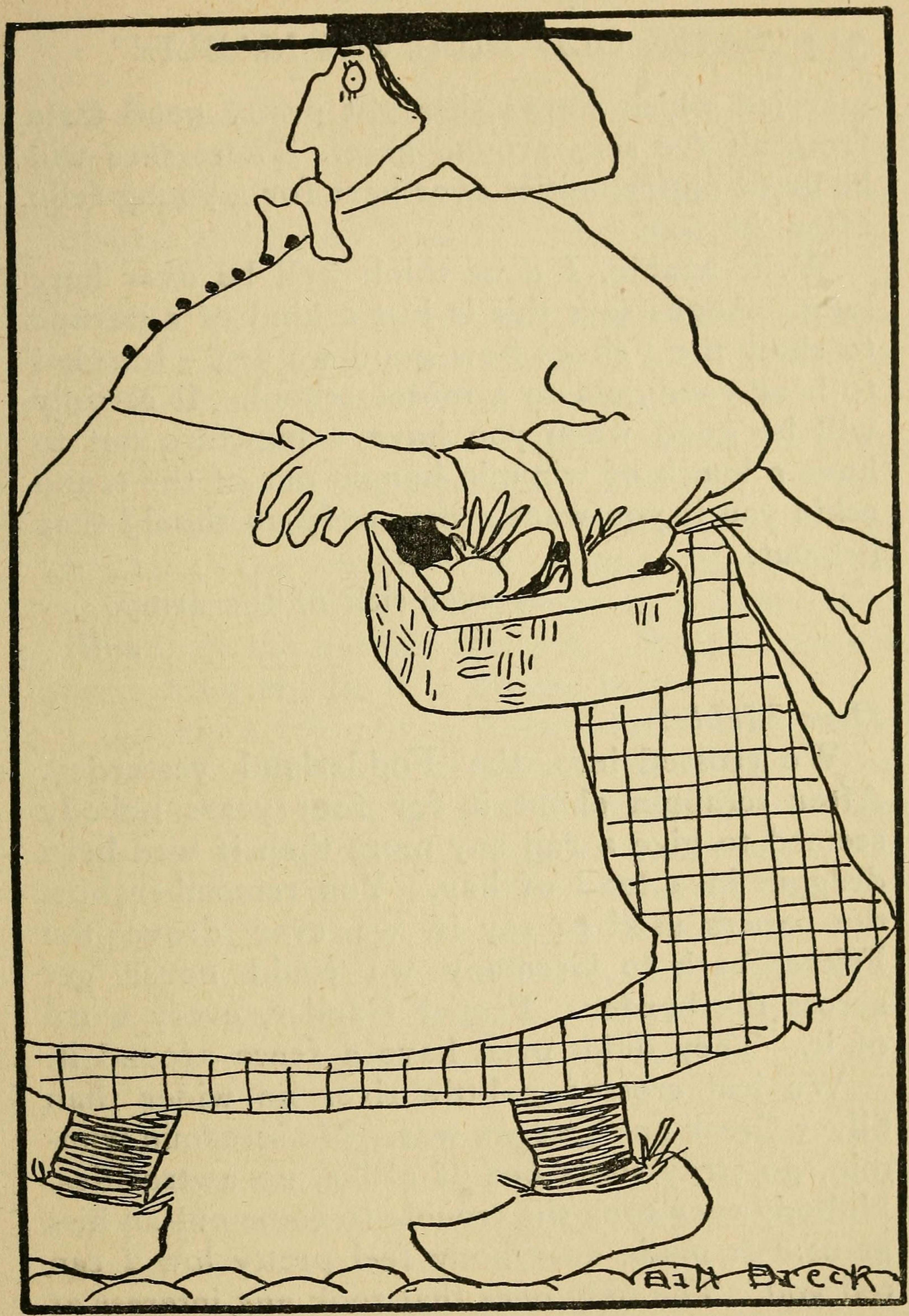
We lay around four days before we started. The Lootenant said that was to give the Fritzes a good start. I cant make out if were still at war or if this is some kind of a handicap race. We traveled a week tho and didnt see one of them.

I guess we gave up after that cause theyve let us lie around here four or five days. They call this the Providence of Luxemburg. Im glad we didnt have to fight our way here.

Thanksgivin is over. You probably know that tho. I suppose we got a lot to be thankful for but a fello gets a short memory when his brains full of mud. As far as I can see the turkeys had the most to crow about this year. It might have been St. Patricks day for all we saw of them. We had stake an gravey an potatoes. The mess sargent said we ought to be thankful it wasnt corn Willie. He could think up some reason why we ought to be grateful to him if he fed us nails.

The people here wear wooden shoes an have big manure piles an no shapes. Theyll scrub the inside of the house till its so clean you could eat offen the floor. Only I never could see any advantage in that cause nobody in his right mind would want to eat there. Then theyll build a manure pile right under the front windo. That aint so bad here as it would be home cause the only time they open the windos is when they want to throw something out. Then they shut em quick sos they wont let out any air. I bet the greatest hardship the German army had was sleepin outdoors for four years.

Angus says the Providence of Luxemburg is run by a Dutchess thats young an good lookin. I guess she must be a foriner. Shes never been



"THE PEOPLE HERE WEAR WOODEN SHOES AN HAVE NO SHAPES"

married which shows shes got pretty good taste from all Ive seen around here. There sure will be great opportunities over here for a young fello after the war.

Well, Mable, I dont think well be over here long. Angus says this is just a kind of a parade to show the Fritzes how good we are. Im glad to hear your goin to a motor school. It certinly will be good when you have a puncture not to have a bunch of wimmin hangin out of the tonno askin you if you want some candy an should they get out.

as ever sick of the army

Bill

Dere Mable:

We crossed into the Fodderland yesterday. After scrappin about it for four years nobody seemed to give a rap any more than if wed been draggin in a load of hay. You remember how the papers used to say if we ever drove the Fritzes back to Germany we could never get across the border. Proper Gander, every word of it. They didnt even have a fence around it.

We just crossed a little river no wider than Silver Creek an there we was. No screamin wimmin, no stray shots out of attiks, no awtrocities. Nobody even took the trouble to come out an hiss at us. It made everybody feel pretty low I can tell you. The only ones that took any interest at

all was a bunch of kids in soldiers caps an stand up collars like your father wears. They seemed to think we was goin to show in their town an trotted along beside us to watch the big tent go up.

Wed all been plannin for some time on committin a few good awtrocities as soon as we got into Germany just to liven things up a bit.

As usual tho when the Captins runnin the party anything sporty is ruled out. The only awtrocities hell let us commit is makin faces at the Fritzes. The whole thing has been an awful disappointment. This country aint no diferent from France or the one we just left. It aint even colored diferent like it is on the map.

Theres a fello from Milwawke in our battery named Joe Bush. It certinly helps to have somebody around that speaks German. Last night Joe told me hed found a regular bed in one of the Fritz houses that the oficers seemed to have missed. He traded me half of it for a package of cigarets. Back to the hay barn for me tonite.

A German bed is like a loaf of bread thats rose to much. Its so high you need a chair to get onto it. I guess youd need a coroner if you ever rolled off it. When I first got up on it I couldnt make out where the bed close was. Then I found there was two matdresses, one about four feet thick an the other on top about a foot thick. Your supposed to sleep between them like a sanwidge. The

little matdress is built so it just reaches from your neck to your ankles if you aint to tall. You can get the idear by lyin down an puttin a sofa pillo over you. Ether the Fritzes has awful tuff feet or there built like a pocket drinkin cup. I tried rollin up like a dog till Joe caught onto it to.

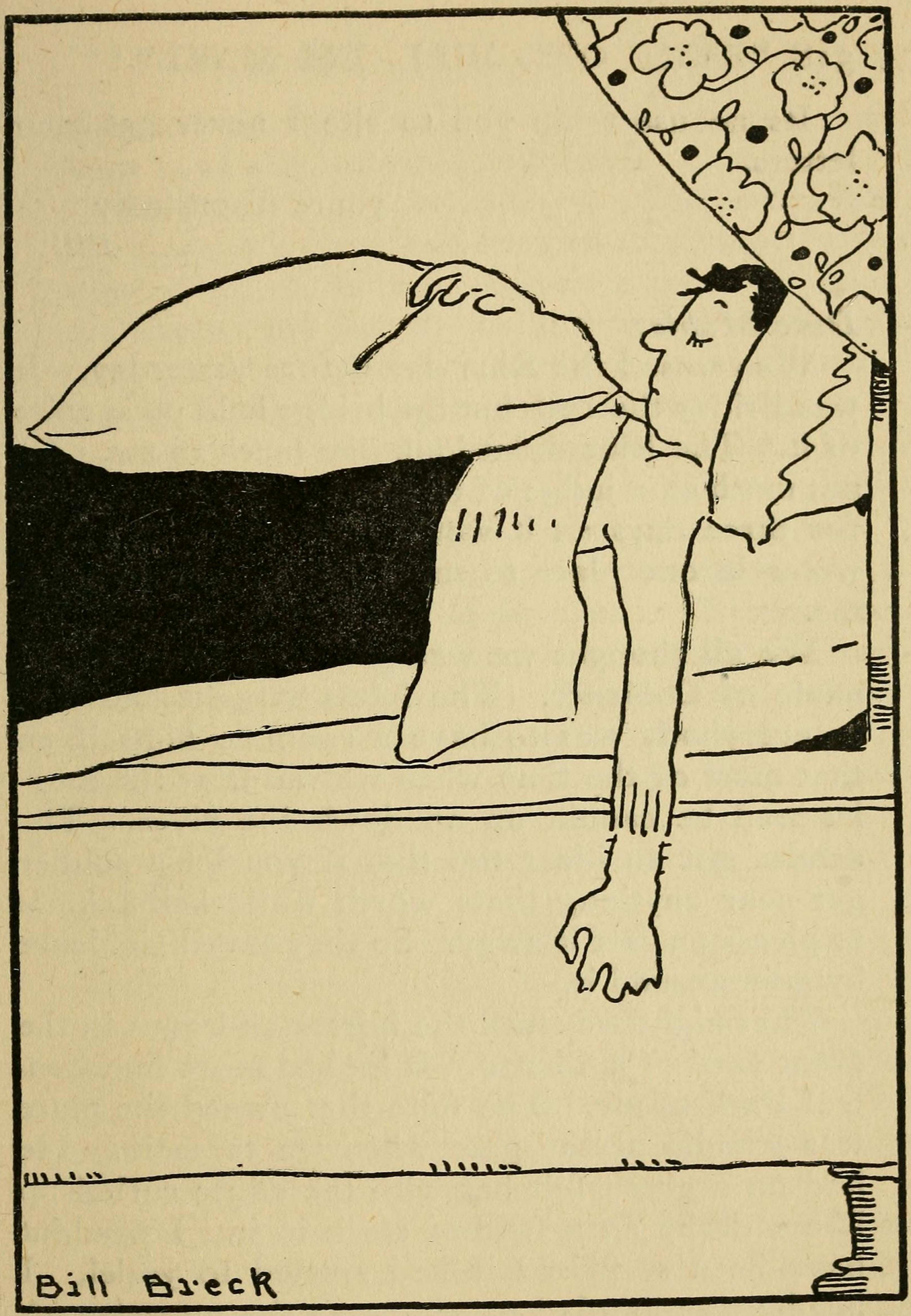
Well, Mable, in about an hour I felt like I was in the hot room of a Turks bath. I dont see how the Germans is so fat if they sleep between these things.

The young girl in a kimony on the cover of the Murad boxes gives you an idear how you sleep on a German bed. I never knew why she looked so discouraged before.

The old fello that owned the bed seemed kind of scared at first. I guess he thought after we found what it was like we might commit a few awtrocities just to put us to sleep.

We agreed to call off the awtrocities if hed leave his Frow cook us up a mess of waffles toot sweet. Frow is what they call there wives, Mable. I guess its short for Frowsie.

I got to start in forgettin my French now an begin on Dutch. I bet I talk pigen Inglish when I get home. I dont have much trouble with languiges tho. I can say quite a few things already like "Ya" and "Nine" an "Vas iss." Thats all right if your just out for a social time but it aint any good in commershul life.



"A GERMAN BED IS LIKE A LOAF OF BREAD THATS ROSE TO MUCH"

Its no use tellin you to rite I never get your letters.

yours disgustedly
Bill

Dere Mable:

We crossed the Rine day before yesterday. It was Friday the 13th but the bridge held up in spite of it. The Rine didnt look like much to me. Im not much of a judge of rivers tho. Its been rainin for three days an it would take an awful lot of water in one place to make much impreshun on me.

We all thought we was goin to a town by the name of Coblence. The Mess sargent had told us everybody was to have a room to himself an that most of the time when we wasnt at the movies wed be canoin up an down the river. The armies got an idear tho that if you let a soldier get near anything thats worth while hell take it to pieces an cart it away. So they saved Coblence by goin around it.

That night we stuck the horses and guns in the front yard of a Chatto. It looked more like Central Park to me. The fello that owned the place was standin at the gate when we came in. He had on a green felt hat with the edges curled up like a derby an a feather stuck in it. I wouldnt have been surprised if hed started to yodel. I bet he was as glad to see us as the meesels. A

regiment of field artilery walkin around your front yard aint no grass cultivator.

This isnt a bad place to lay over for a day tho. The town is built round a big cliff. On top is the ruins of an old cassel. Some of the town tried to clime up the side of the cliff an got stuck half way. In the house where Im bilited the front door is where it ought to be an the back door opens onto the street from the third floor. I can hear your mother sayin, "Run up in the attik, Mable, an see who that is knockin at the back door."

Theres a little stream runnin thru the town. Its very beautiful an full of tin cans. The sides are all bricked up. The Fritzes would make the trees grow square if they could. The hills go straight up all around us. I dont know how the stream ever got in here or how were goin to get out. It certinly is a useful place for artilery. About the only thing you could shoot out of here would be a skyrocket.

They told us we was goin to have yesterday to ourselves. Then the last minit they made us all take a bath. In the army they dont give you credit for knowin how or when to take a bath. They have a corperal there to show you. The one they had on the job yesterday must have learned from a correspondence school.

You dont get into a bath here. You take it out of something an spread it over you. This time theyd heated a big kettle of water in a wood shed.

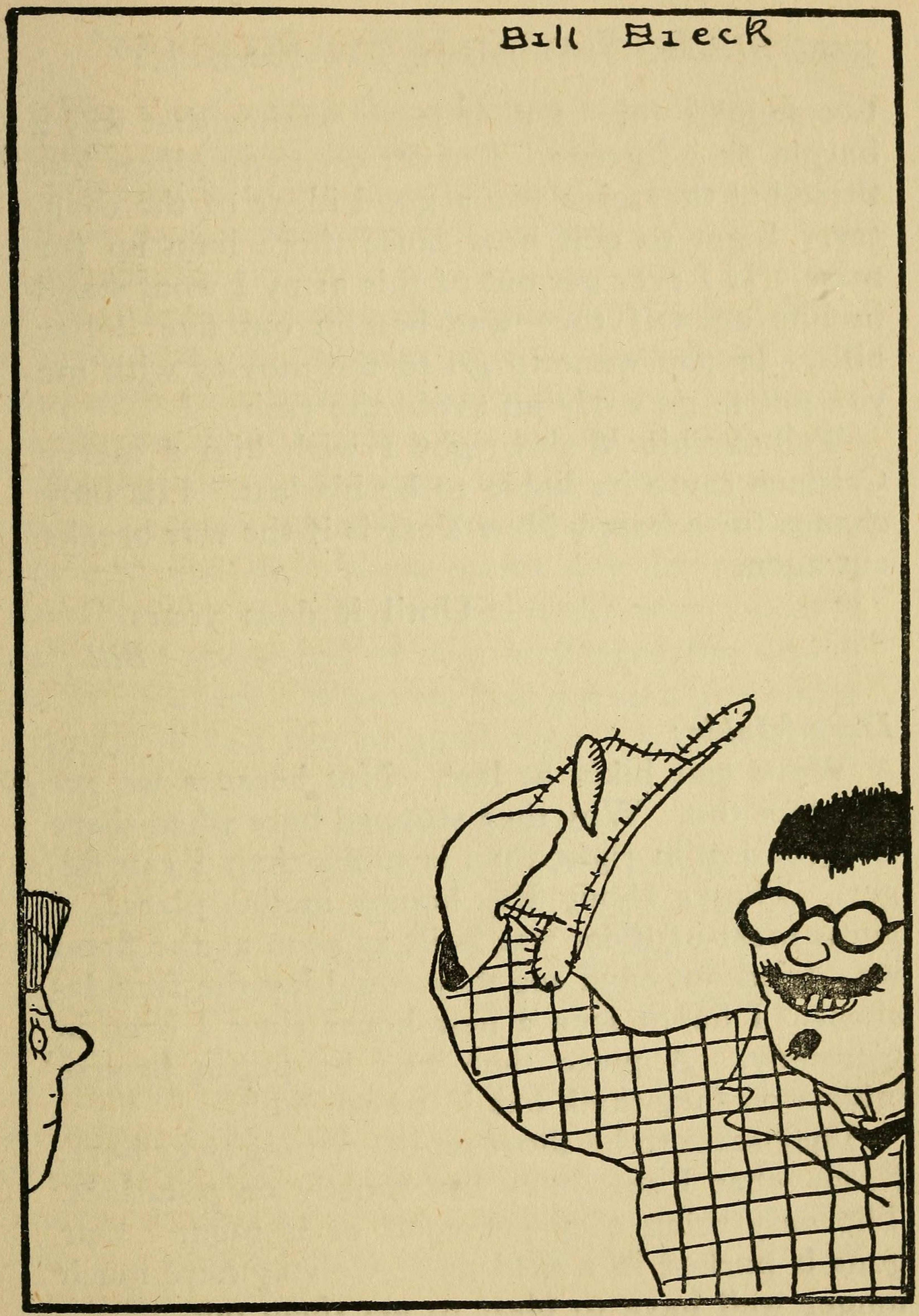
You dipped out a pailful an put some of it over you an the rest over your close. Just about the time youve got a good lather worked up the corperal says "Come on. Hurry up an get your close on. Your eight minits is up." Ford ought to get hold of that fello. Hed have them poppin out of the factory like corn out of a roaster.

I didnt get a bath, but I didnt need one. Me an Angus both took one the day after the armistice was signed. There aint nothin thatll keep a man fit like keepin clean as the poets say.

Everyones sore at these Dutchmen. They havnt got as much spirit as a bottle of near beer. All they do is take off there hats to us like we was a bunch of ladies an say "Tag." I thought first they was sayin "Dog." I went to the Captin an ast him if I could clean up with the next fello that said it.

The Captin said Tag was just Fritz for Howdy. Then I ast him if I could clean up half a dozen of them anyway just to get them started on the right lines. He says "Smith, if you try any of your back alley sanitashun around here youll be cleanin up around the gard house as quick as we get one." He thinks hes awful funny. Thats the way it goes, tho, Mable. One day your a quitter if you dont throw everything but the kitchin stove at a fello and the next day they want you to kiss him.

Im sendin you a lot of post cards I paid eighty



"THEY TAKE OFF THERE HATS TO US"

two fennigs for. I dont know wether that was a bargin or a fortune. I never seen any places like these but they give you a good idear of the country. I got to quit now cause there linin up for mess. If I ever get out of this army I wont stand in line agen if they was handin out five dollar bills. If you want to go to the movies with me you got to go early an avoid the rush.

Tell Archie Wainwright I wish him a merry Crismus cause its liable to be his last. His only chance for a happy New Year is if the war breaks out agen.

Until it does yours

Bill

Dere Mable:

Weve quit hikin at last. Not because we get anyplace tho. Why they stopped here when there is a road goin right thru is more than I can figger. Theres about fifty houses in this place. I guess most of them was built as soon as the flood was dried out enuff sos they could lay the foundashuns. I havnt seen a new house since I been in Germany. A place that wed be puttin bronze tablets on they think has just been built.

They seem to be short on everything over here. From what I seen they live mostly on potadoes. The only thing they get enuff of is mud. Our guns is parked in a field an if we stay here much longer well have to blast to get them out.

The Captin says the rules on letter ritin is off an we can say where we are. The only thing we cant do is criticize the army. I dont know where we are an I couldnt spell it anyhow so theres not much to rite about.

We sleep in rooms now insted of barns. The Dutch dont seem to care much. I can hear your mother if four tramps came walkin into her front parlor an went to sleep on the floor. The old fello that owns the room thinks were crazy because we have to open our windos every night. He told Joe Bush there wasnt any use makin a fire for us cause when he spent the whole evenin gettin the room full of heat wed open the windo an let it all out. When we first got into that room I guess it had the original heat his granfather put in it.

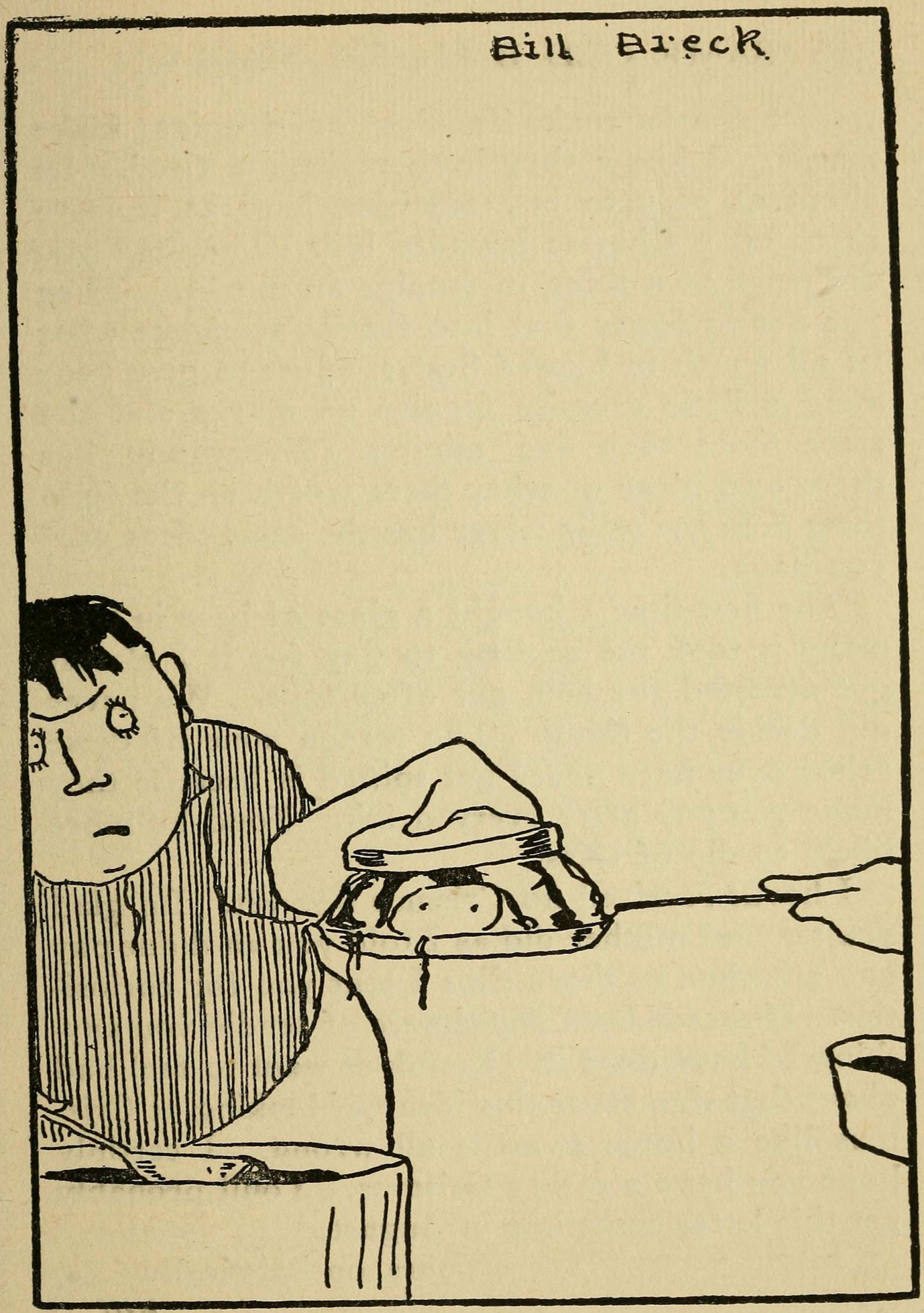
Crismus is only a few days away. I suppose theyll let us sleep half an hour extra for a Crismus present an then forget to tell the buglers like they did last year. About all it amounted to was standin around in the rain half an hour longer for mess.

I havnt had my feet under a table now in four months. Theyve gotten so big since I been wearin these army shoes that I dont know if theyll go under any more. When I get home Ill probably pile my whole dinner in a soup plate an take it out in the back yard.

All feelin aside, Mable, it certinly will be good to get my food seperated agen. These fellos would pour your coffee over your dinner if there was any room. When you come up to the kitchin the first K.P. sticks a piece of meat in the bottom of your mess kit. Thats a sort of a foundashun. Then a spoonful of loose potadoes hit it like a soft nose bullet an thats the last you see of your meat. The next fello covers that with a quart of gravy an sticks a pickle in the top with his thum like inlaid work. The last one levels it off with a piece of bread slammed on like a cover. Angus says its a wise man that knows his own dinner unless hes got a good memory.

Ive learned to put down an awful lot of food, tho, in less time than it takes to chew it. You got to be fast if you want any seconds. Some of these fellos must store up there food like squirrels cause there finished an back in the line before its moved ten places. Theres always some smart alex that washes up his mess kit an pretends hes just come up from the picket line. We got a mess sargent tho that makes Shylock Homes look like a night watchman. He could tell yesterdays greece from todays if you scoured your mess kit with sandpaper.

The Fritzes are more balled up on there money than the French. These fellos dont even know what the stuffs worth themselves. They have two kinds of money, fennigs an marks. I dont know



"LEVELS IT OFF WITH A PIECE OF BREAD"

wether marks make fennigs or fennigs make marks. I know they both make me tired. Its about as easy to buy anything here as it is to check up a Chinese lawndry bill. They tell you the price of a thing in fennigs an marks. Then you got to figger that into franks an figger what its all worth in United States. Just to give your mind a little exercise fennigs an marks aint the same more than five minites. Everybody has there own idear of what there worth an the fello thats doin the sellin never has the same idear that you have.

The first time I bought a glass of beer in Germany it took me so long to pay for it I almost got arrested for bein out after taps. We never did decide the thing. The reason none of these fellos over here never get spiffed is because they make you pay after every drink. Youd be more likely to die of thirst.

I havnt received no Crismus box yet. Im glad you an your mother did as I told you an didnt pay any atenshun to those slips I sent you for curiosities. If thered been any chance of sendin you anything Id have done it. You dont want to feel bad about that tho, cause this idear of looking at Crismus like a horse swap is all wrong. I certinly hope you have a merry Crismus. Youll probably get this letter sometime in August.

Yours optimistically

Bill

Dere Mable:

Another Crismus an New Years has gone by. I wonder where theyll pick out for me to spend my next one. I wish I could get hold of a geografy an see what places are left. One of these days I may be able to get a furlo for Crismus if we happen to be fightin some country right near home. Then I can tell you how all the different nashuns spend there holidays.

I knew thered be some string on sleepin late Crismus mornin. The day before there was a couple of fellos late to revelry. They were fellos whod never done any work anyway so I couldnt see how it mattered much. The Captin said hed been plannin on lettin us sleep till seven o'clock Crismus but if we couldnt learn to make revelry wed have to keep on practisin gettin up at six. It seems to me if a fello dont know how to do that now he never will. If I get up at six the first Crismus I spend home itll be six in the evening you can bet.

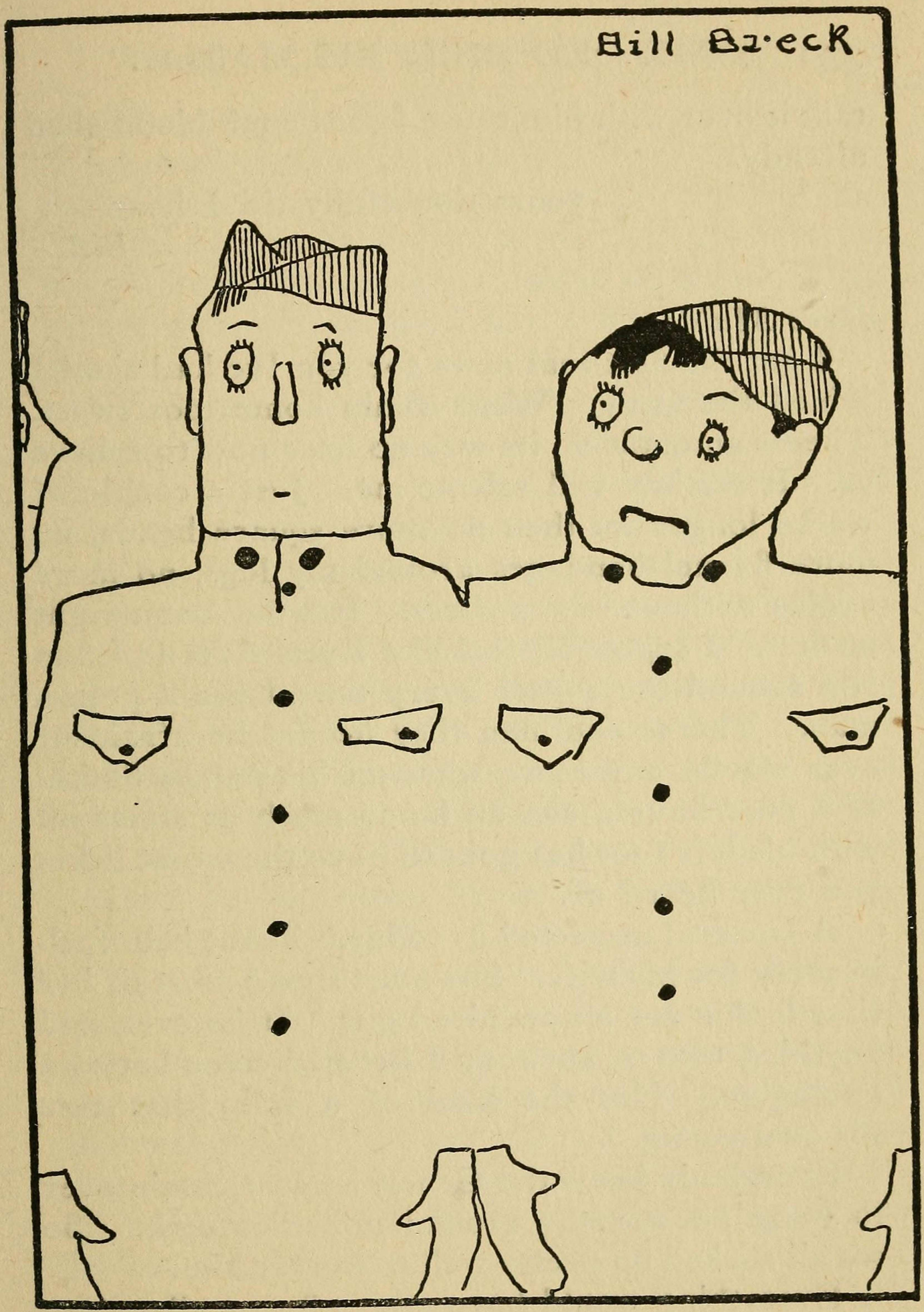
Crismus mornin they lined us all up an gave each fello a little box marked "Greetins from the Folks at Home." Only they didnt say whose folks. Inside there was some tobacco an cigarets an chockolate an the like. Angus thinks theres something foney about it somewhere. He says like as not theyll take it out of our next pay roll or our A Lot Meants. Angus would think you had

some axe to grind if you pulled him out of a burnin buildin.

We didnt have nothin to do Crismus but take care of the horses an "the usual policin." That left me with almost an hour in the middle of the day without anything to do. I was goin to rite you a letter but I felt kind of drowsy. Ever since I been in the army Ive said that my first duty was to keep fit so I went to sleep insted. Patriotic. Thats me all over, Mable.

The reasen I got a chance to rite this letter is because some horse stepped on my foot the other day an I cant walk. It wasnt any accident. That horse an me never got along. Hes been layin for me ever since I brushed his teeth with a curry brush. The more I see of horses the more I want to meet the fello that wrote Black Buty. He must have learned about horses in a carpenter shop. Im goin to rite a book about them when I get home that will put the S. P. C. A. out of business. I got to stop ritin now an answer sick call with my foot. Yesterday they gave me some pills. I suppose today theyll look at my tongue an tell me its my stummick thats out of order.

Well, Mable, I havnt had so much as a pictur post card from you in two weeks. I hope that fello Archie Wainwright aint botherin you agen cause our hospittles is crowded enuff now. Im still a gentleman but if I ever catch him moldin your hammick around his figger—well, Mable, Id



"THEY LINED US ALL UP"

talk it over with him cause I seen enuff blood shed already.

yours doubtfully till I hear

Bill

Dere Mable:

I got the first real news for you Ive had since I joined the army. Were comin home toot sweet. Theres an outfit on its way up here now to relieve us. It certinly will relieve me. Just a couple of weeks longer an then no more square heads, no more flannel bandages around my legs, no more engins without cowcatchers. It wont seem right at first. I expect Ill feel like I was A.W.O.L. an run around the corner every time I see a policeman. Theres one man they neednt be afraid of ever startin any more wars an his names Smith. If I ever have a son an he so much as starts off with his left foot hes goin to have the worst lickin you ever heard of.

A General inspected us today. I cant help feelin sorry for his wife. She must spend most of her time lookin for a new hired girl. If he ever said anything nice to anybody I bet hed come back an apologize. Hes the kind of a fello that eats his own young.

Everybody knew the General wasnt comin over to hang no wreaths around nobodies neck. So we all slicked up pretty well to humor him.

Everything would have gone off as well as you

could have expected if it hadnt been for that horse. A jokes all right in its place but its place aint under a General. The horse was so big that the General like to have bust gettin up. As soon as he got set the horse took a couple of steps. Then he sat down in the mud like a dog an let out a groan.

Of course it was all off then. By the time hed coaxed that horse up to the battery he was so sore hed have found rust on the perly gates an put Saint Peter under arrest for not bein shaved.

When he got around to my seckshun I thought he was about due to be out of breath. I had a little rip in my pants that I hadnt had time to sew up. Nothing anybodied notice. Just my knee stickin thru. That fello could see a hole in your undershirt tho. When he came up to me he looked me over like I was a windo dummy that he didnt care much about. Then he says to the Captin "What do you mean by lettin a man stand inspeckshun like that?"

The Captin looked at me surprised like hed never seen me before. Then he turns to the sargent an says "Sargent, I want a report on why was that man permitted to stand inspeckshun in that condishun." They all talk as if they were doin me a favor by lettin me stand inspeckshun. Ill tell the world I didnt go around an ask nobodies permishun.

The sargent looked at my pants kind of hurt

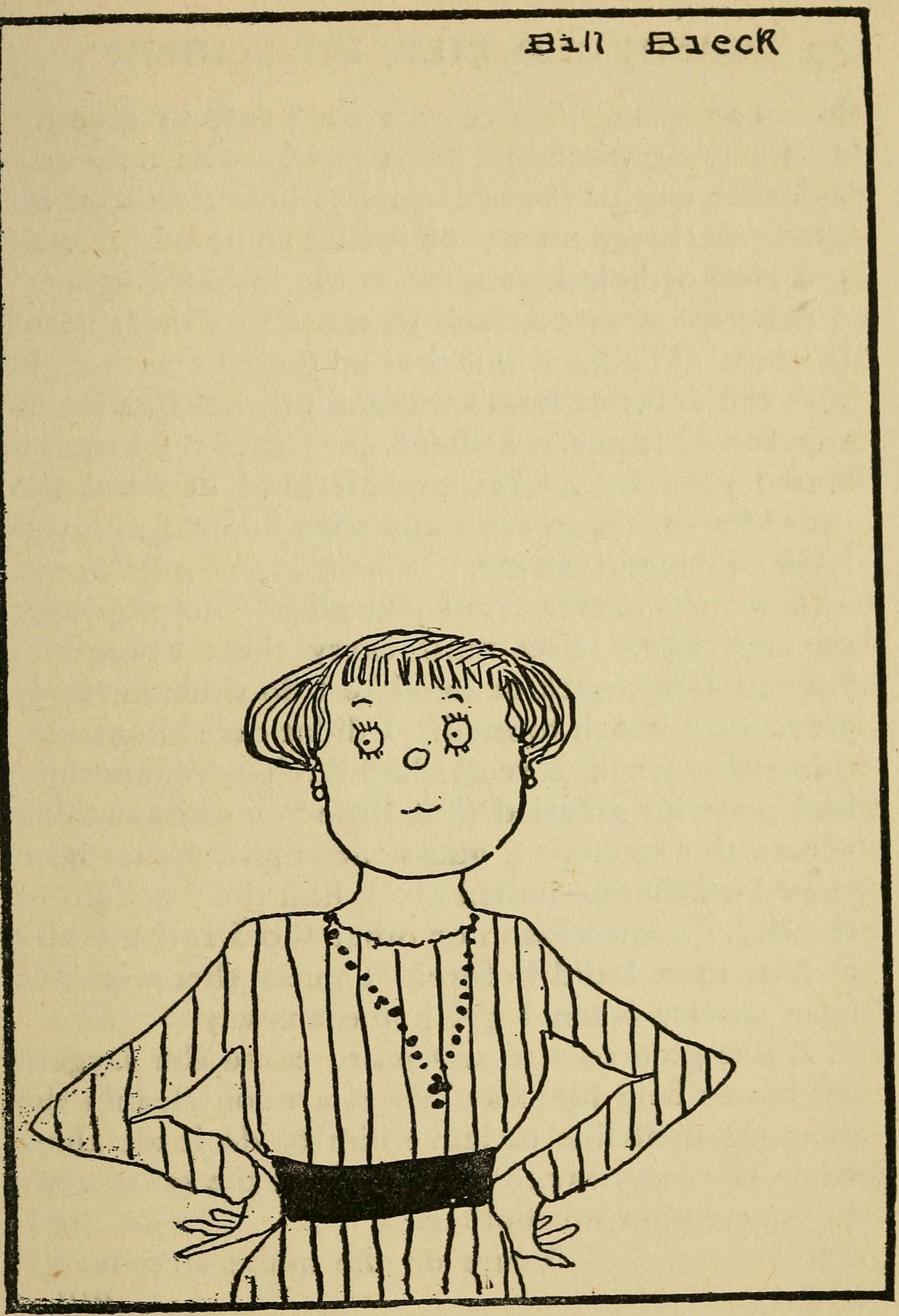
like I hadnt ast for a new pair thirty seven times. After the General had put the whole battery under arrest an rode away to get some raw meat he sighed like a fello that everybodies agenst. Then he turns to the corperal an says "What the this an that do you mean by gettin me in Dutch, you big space filler?"

So the corperal stuck me on detail manacurin the streets for a couple of days. About all there is left for me is to go around an kick a few horses in the stummick after dark.

The funny part about it is that everybody knew there hadnt been no pants ishued since we got here. Half the fellos in the battery is comin thru in places the General couldnt see because he was mounted. That dont make no difference. A fellos knees aint got no rights in this mans army. I wish I was a Lady from Hell an I wouldnt have to bother about pants. Thats tecknickle, Mable. I dont guess youll get it.

They call this passin the buck. In the army they got it fixed up so that nothin aint ever nobodies fault. Its always on the next fello down. That works out pretty good unless you happen to be on the bottom step like me. I dont know why they call it passin the buck. I never saw it pass him yet.

Your Crismus box came yesterday. It sure was good of you to send it after all I said. At least a good part of it came considerin one end of the



"THAT LITTLE SNUB NOSED THING ACROSS THE STREET"

box was gone. There was enuff left to give me an idear of what had been in it. The only reason that any of it got here was because theyd set so many things on top of it that some of the stuff got kind of baled an stuck to the insides.

The thing that struck us most was the size of the box. Whoever got that up must have thought that the folks at home was goin to send us jewelrey for Crismus. I didnt care cause I knew it wasnt your falt. Joe took it kind of hard tho cause he forgot to send any slips home an he was kind of countin on me.

I got six letters from you all at once a couple of days ago. You must carry them around in your pocket a week or two like I do when anybody gives me a bunch to mail. I didnt care about anything tho when I read that Archie Wainwright had gone an married that little snub nosed thing across the street. I guess he must have been tipped off that nobodied given him the freedom of the city. Some reason or other tho I feel madder at him than I did before. I guess theres got to be a casulty when I get home anyway.

I aint goin to rite any more cause the sargent ast me to help him out this afternoon cleanin the guns. I dont like to leave him to do it all alone when were so near the finish. Tell the good news to your father an mother.

Yours on the home stretch

Bill

Dere Mable:

Here I am ritin you at the govermints expense for the last time. Were in the same place where we first rested almost a year ago. It hasnt changed much except theyve gotten in more mud an tents since then an there aint so many boats to unpack.

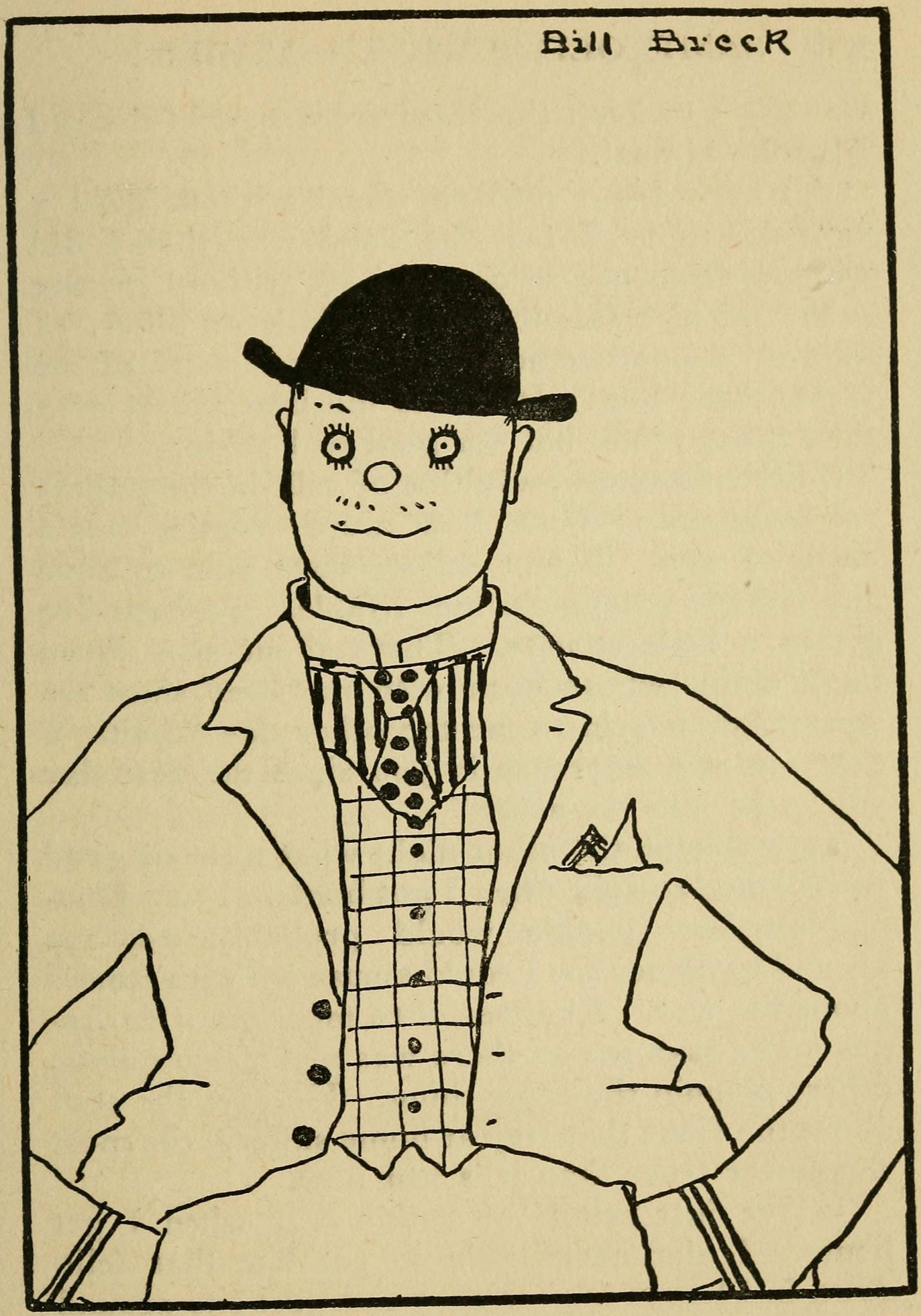
Weve turned in our Soizant Canses to some monument factory. Weve said good by to our horses for ever. The last thing one of them did was to try an kick me as I went past. Thats there idea of gratitude. Now we got less to do than the doboys cause we havnt even got rifles to clean. This is the last letter youll ever get from me in France. If I have my say about it its the last letter youll ever get from me anywhere. I never want to get out of telefone range agen. Our boat is all ready. This will probably travel over on the same boat with me. I wanted to rite you from the A.E.F. for the last time. An by the way, Mable, that dont mean Am Expectin Flowers but Am Extremely Fortunate.

There aint much to say just like there aint much to do. I feel awful funny. I cant exactly explain it. Of course I want to go home. Thats all Ive wanted to do since November. At the same time I feel kind of sad like you do when your comin back to work from your summer vacashun. We been in the old army so long, an weve done the same things an cussed at them so many times, that

you get sort of fond of the whole business just like you do any job that takes an awful long time an a lot of hard work to finish, but that youve finished. I guess you could get sentimental about piece work in a factory—after youd quit.

I never thought when I sat here in the mud last May an rote you how Id escaped from the pearls of the sea, as the poets say, that Id ever sit here agen an rite you that I was comin home. I never menshuned this of course for fear it would worry you. Now that its all over tho its all right to talk about it. It wasnt that I was scared cause I guess you know that I was never scared of nothin. Nerveless. Thats me all over, Mable. But I used to think of how hard youd take it when you saw it in the papers, an how people would come an look at your house an shake there heads an walk away. Some of them would pull out a lace hankercheff out of there neck or sleeve or wherever you carry those things. Theyd touch up there eyes a bit an say "I knew him well," wether they did or not.

You know, Mable, that once or twice when I get lyin awake at night thinkin about all that stuff I came pretty near cryin myself it struck me as so sad. The one I liked to think of best tho was the minister sayin a few butiful words about me Sunday. All the people was turnin around to look at you. You were cryin quiet like an your mother



"IM GOING TO BE JUST PLAIN MR. BILL SMITH"

was tryin to keep the tears from spottin the red Moroko himnal.

An here I am safe an sound without even a wound stripe. I feel the same way that I did when I came across on the boat without getting sunk. It aint fair to you somehow or other. I kind of cheated somehow, tho for the life of me I cant figer how. It makes me into a sort of a third class crook but Im glad to be one.

Theres been an awful lot of talk in the papers an magazines about how were comin home changed men. I dont believe your goin to have any trouble recognizin me, Mable. Perhaps Ive gotten a little stouter. Thats about all. Even the Captin, whose been with me ever since we started, was sayin to me the other day "Smith, I cant see any difference in you since the first day you came into the army."

I got thinkin the other night what a lot of good yarns I had to spin when I got home. I was plannin on how people would probably ask me around to dinner sos I could amuse em with stories about the war. I happened to menshun it to Angus an he says yes an there was about two milyun others plannin the same thing. He says the stuff about the folks that stay at home sufferin the most was never truer than it is just now.

So Ive just sworn off talkin war when I get home. I aint never goin to get like that fello down in Henrys barber shop that just sits around

all day tryin to get somebody to lissen to the Battle of Gethisburg.

I may have speshul occashuns when I let loose. Like once in a while when were sittin alone evenins in the little house with the green blinds that aint built yet. Then Ill get out the helmet that belonged to the red headed Fritz an the looger pistel an the irun crosses. Ill tell you how the big ones sounded when they went over the dug-out. Ill show you how Fritz says Kamarad. Ill tell you about bilets an mud an Top sargents an whiz bangs. Perhaps once a year, say Crismus or something, Ill tell about goin over the top. I got to get that out of my sistem once in a while.

The rest of the time Im goin to be just plain Mr. Bill Smith, docter or brick layer or lawyer or street car conductor—anything in fact that hasnt got any horses connected with it.

So good by for a while. The next time you here from me itll be the scrapin of my hobnails on the front stoop. Then look out. Impulsive. Thats me all over, Mable.

Bill

THE END

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